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## THE ESSENTIAL NATURE OF MUSIC

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**W**HEN we come to a serious study of the position taken by music in the polity of human life, there are two points which are most obvious. The first of these is that the art, in its elemental forms chiefly, but also in a less degree in those more highly developed, has had a widespread and an effective influence on nearly all departments of human life. Secondly, that that influence is the most unaccountable and erratic of all the influences to which human life is subject. It is an influence of which no science has yet given any adequate explanation, and least of all those sciences which are most applicable to the subject, psychology and sociology.

It is not improbable that its very universality has been the cause of its neglect by psychologists, sociologists and historians. So often is it difficult to see the importance of that which works in a subtle way among all classes, that there is always a temptation to ignore it, especially where, as with music, it has left no landmarks on history, and no outstanding characteristics in psychology. Music is the one art in which all find pleasure, and by which all are inspired. Shakespeare was not a musician, yet he had some pungent remarks as to "the man that hath no music in his soul." If such a being did or could exist he would be fit only for the grossest evils of which we know; but it is well-nigh impossible that he should ever appear in human guise. Nevertheless, the greater our lack of the sense or appreciation of music, so much the greater, as a rule, is our lack of the saving graces of humanity. Without being a pathologist it is comparatively easy to see why the curative qualities of music are now being increasingly recognised. Its qualities as a physical as well as a mental refreshment

and food cannot be ignored by those who realise the relation that exists between mind and body. Its expressive power is supplemental to that of speech, but it is just as necessary as speech itself to our health and happiness. We may live without either speech or music, but living so is life maimed of two of its most precious faculties. The lack of speech is usually either the cause or the consequence of some physical or mental disorder, and equally so—though not so apparent—is the lack of musical feeling and expression. From the crooning of its sorrows by the infant weakling to the spontaneous outburst of song by the young man rejoicing in his strength, and from this to the unrecorded recollection by the aged imbecile of songs sung years before, music is inseparable from our lives. We can do without the graphic and plastic arts, for they are not essential or elemental to our nature. They are the products of long ages of growth and development, and are imitative in their scope and intent. Music, in its present state of development, no doubt is largely artificial; but in its primary and essential forms it is an elemental and original quality of man's nature. High and low, rich and poor, good and bad, old and young, learned and unlearned, wise and foolish, all find in it a means of expression of their joys and a solace in their woes. Without music man could not exist, for he would destroy himself in his melancholy if he did not wither and pine away in the lack of cheer and solace. He would go mad for want of a means for expressing the emotions which fill the every moment of his life, and for the grotesque ugliness with which the world would be filled. For in music are the elements of beauty, of sound, motion and form; without it beauty ceases to exist and life becomes death.

Yet if we approached half a dozen of the world's greatest thinkers and asked each of them the question "What is music?" we should probably get half a dozen answers of such varied character as to leave us no wiser, and possibly even more bewildered than before. It is also pretty certain that not one of such answers would be a satisfactory one viewed apart from the conflict of ideas arising out of so many different standpoints. Each would define it according to the science or philosophy which is his particular study, or according to his peculiar trend of thought. The mathematician would define it as the sounds resultant on certain regular and controlled vibrations of the air; the idealist philosopher would explain it as a supernatural gift the source and extent of which we cannot reach on this side of the grave; one



would show it to be a development of speech, and another would prove it independent of but supplementary to speech. Of these two latter views, Herbert Spencer, the sociologist, and Richard Wagner, the musician, would seem to be the most redoubtable of the champions of the speech theory, while Richard Wallaschek, Ernest Newman, Jules Combarieu and others have made out what would appear to be a strong case for the theory of independent development.

It is all but impossible, however, to prove the nature of the origin of what, if it is not quite as ancient as is the human race itself, is pretty nearly so. Probably neither of these theories so ably contested by great debators is exclusively in the right, though it is equally probable that both have a certain amount of truth in them. As things exist now the two faculties of speech and song are so intimately related that, while each still retains its independence, there seems to be little practical purpose to serve by ascertaining, if it were possible to ascertain, the origin of either or both. Each is the natural and perfect complement (i. e. *complément*) of the other, and lacking either we are unable to express in any full degree our entire mental and spiritual natures. Whereas each is a natural means of expressing thought and emotion, one is mainly the means of expressing thought and the other mainly (and primarily) the means of expressing emotion. There are instances in which both express precisely the same thing; yet generally each has a power to express something of which the other fails. When words and music are combined, whether by means of joint utterance in song or chorus, or by the suggestive means in what we call "programme music," it is generally the words which express the ideas and supply the mental framework, while the music expresses the underlying emotion.

All expression, whether of thought or emotion, is either deliberate or spontaneous; intentional or accidental. It may be crude and fulfil its purpose very imperfectly, as when an uneducated person attempts to speak of something outside his or her previous experience; or it may be highly developed so that it delivers its message fully and completely, as when an orator whose knowledge and control of language are each perfect in their day, speaks on a subject of which he is a master. Artistic expression is never entirely spontaneous, because art implies deliberation. Exactly how and when deliberation takes place varies according to circumstances. The spontaneity of art expression comes from previous deliberation, so that direct deliberation may not be necessary. Nature is not art until art is second nature; but always

art is something more than nature. It must be sincere and without cant or mere artificiality; though artifice has its place in art it is one of complete subservience, and a merely spontaneous utterance is not art. So when we speak of the Art of Music we speak of something that has extended beyond, though it has not moved away from, its original and primary functions.

Before it is an art, however, music is a means of expression. In its simplest and most elemental forms it is a means for the expression of pure emotion. The possibility of there being states of pure emotion, of feeling without thought, about which psychologists argue, need not detain us here. We often hear of or experience what are known in common parlance as "thoughts too deep for words." These, whether momentary or continuing are merely emotions or feelings unmixed with thought or incapable of being shaped by thought, and consequently inexpressible in words. When thought is employed some verbal utterance, adequate or inadequate, becomes possible. Because music is the one means of expression of pure emotion it is the only one which may be entirely spontaneous.

Inarticulate, unordered sound is the primary and elemental expression of emotion. The shriek of pain, the cry of joy, the wail of grief—these are the natural and most effective utterances of certain things that cannot be expressed in words. "I am afraid," or the corresponding words in any other language, uttered in the most terror-stricken tones, is almost expressionless compared with the formless and unspellable wail of terror that inspires the feeling which it also expresses. What is more expressive than the grunt of the satisfied gourmand? No words will convey even a meagre suggestion of the feeling which this unmeasured and indeliberate sound so vividly portrays.

Brought down to its primary and most elemental conditions it is into this that all the elaborate development of art music resolves itself. It is the expression of feelings to which no words can do adequate justice, and while the application of intellectual formulae has made it more understandable by others, it is its spontaneity first of all that makes it so fully expressive of that which bears but little relation to thought, and therefore to speech. "Words will not express" many emotions which other sounds express quite clearly and forcibly. To some extent we can trace this back to the sounds made by the lower animals, at least by inference, if not by actual genealogy. In the purring of the cat and the tiger, the growling and barking of the dog, the roaring of the lion, even, possibly, in the croak of the frog and the chirp of

the grasshopper, we have expressions of emotion—of contentment or discontent, of pleasure or pain or anger. Doubtless in many of these animals such sounds arise largely from physical emotions; but the dividing line between physical and psychological emotion has yet to be determined. Nor are these sounds music as we usually understand it, any more than the sound of the waves on the seashore or of the waterfall or the rustling branches of the trees are music. They are, nevertheless, the elemental sounds out of which music is formed, and apparently they arise from emotions which in more highly developed beings are expressed in sounds more ordered, though as an inevitable consequence more artificial. Humming and crooning are a species of spontaneous music that is closely related to art music, because the melodies used are commonly those in the construction of which art has been employed.

There is bound to be this relation in all even of the most spontaneous and the least ordered of the utterances of civilised peoples. We cannot, even in our wildest moments, cast off altogether the tradition and growth of centuries; and therefore, consciously or unconsciously, we express the least controlled of our emotions in the terms, the ordered sounds, of art. Those persons who have the least complete control of their emotions, who are possessed of few emotions, or who are in the habit of concealing their emotions, seldom or never indulge in such practices as humming, crooning, whistling, etc. Such indulgence is a sure sign that emotion is the ruling force; the restraint of it generally, though not invariably, is a sign that thought or mentality is the ruling force. Those who have little capacity for thought and whose circumstances have compelled them to restrain their emotions—such, for instance, as many among the poorest classes of labourers in both town and country, to whom long hours and poor living are the daily round—also refrain from this indulgence. In this case it is the restraint of emotion, not the lack of thought which causes the suppression of such sounds, for the youthful peasant characterised in the popular song, "A careless whistling boy am I", is usually all emotion.

To other proofs of the essentially emotional character of music we must add the fact that it is, more than anything else, a means of collective expression. Collective thought—and particularly thought on the part of a large crowd—is so rare as to be almost non-existent. Collective emotion is constantly at work, and is the cause of all great social movements, whether made by sudden impulse or by gradual and slow development. And collective emotion is a force of which it is impossible to estimate

either the direction or the impetus, the power. There is a cause for this which can best be ascertained by deduction from the effect.

Collective expression is not, as some conceive it to be, the mere expression on the same subject of thoughts and feelings possessed in common by a number of individuals. There is a certain character about collective thought, feeling and expression that is not the mere agglomeration of the thoughts and emotions of the individuals of which the collective body is composed. The conjunction of two individual temperaments produces a third collective temperament (a kind of joint temperament possessed by two persons acting in sympathy) which exists only in the conjunction of the two. The possession by two minds of a unity of thought is rare; but the possession by two or more souls of a unity of emotion is so frequent as to be a commonplace. When a large number of temperaments (of emotional dispositions) are conjoined, the result is a new temperament still more widely separated in character from that of any individual, and of deeper intensity, though usually shortlived.

Upon those who come into contact with such a collective temperament, whether as contributing separate atoms to its constitution, in opposition to it, or merely as observers, the effect is more rapid and frequently more vital than that produced by contact even with the strongest and most distinctive of individual temperaments. This quick influence is seen most in music, in which numbers have a more direct and powerful influence than in other matters.

Proportionately with the number of occasions on which it is possible, a spontaneous burst into song is more common on the part of collective temperaments than on the temperaments of individuals. This, however, is in inverse ratio to the size of the body out of which the collective temperaments arise, and a small party is more ready to sing than is a large crowd. Half a dozen individuals sharing a common emotion and unrestrained by the artificial conventions of society, very readily express in song the common emotion which they feel, particularly if that emotion is one of joy or pleasure. The previous association of the music may have had little or nothing to do with the emotion it is called upon to express. (The use of "Tipperary" is a striking and appropriate case in point). This is a matter of unimportance, though the character of the music will probably be in some degree suited to the emotion. What happens is that the emotion is expressed in the terms which come most readily to hand, and which best fit it at the moment. Probably those who so express themselves have

no thought of the fitness or unfitness of what they are doing. They exercise no process of selection, for they have no standard by which to select, and possibly no variety of emotional expression by which they may give vent to varied emotions. They express themselves in music because it is the one method of giving utterance to their emotions, and serves the same purpose no matter what such emotions may be. At the same time, one reason why large bodies are not so quick at expressing their emotions in song is that, though there may be perfect unity of emotion, to obtain a unity of expression does require a certain degree of thought. This thought is supplied, not infrequently, by a leader whose one capacity for the office is a quicker and more spontaneous thought.

Rhythm is one of the most important elements in music for various reasons. It is one of the commonest forms of elementary music, and it is also the means by which emotional or natural sounds are converted into the materials of art. It is the latter largely because it is the means by which sound may be measured and stored away or remembered by the non-scientific hearer. We say nowadays that "time" is the means by which rhythm may be measured; but long before time measurement was invented or developed on an orderly system, rhythm was employed not only in the making of music, but as a means of teaching and learning tones unrememberable without it.

From the foregoing it is possible to construct a short formal definition which will serve to unify considerations of the nature and utility of the art. *Music is that art which expresses in an orderly manner the emotions of human beings collectively or individually, whether such emotions be combined with thought or not.* Its pleasurable sensations are caused sometimes by its actual beauty of construction, but more often by the fact that it arouses a certain sympathy between the one responsible for its expression (either composer or performer) and the one on whom the impression is made; that is, the hearer. Sounds which do not arouse this sympathy fulfil only the minor functions of music, and however beautifully constructed the music containing them may be, it is quickly condemned by all save the mere pedant. In considering the subject of the expressiveness of music, therefore, we are compelled by its nature to see chiefly how far and in what manner it expresses and arouses the emotions.

But there is one other point also to be considered; that is the necessity and utility of the limitations of the art. Limitation, the exclusion of some matter or of some methods, is of the very essence of intelligence and therefore of art. It is the most important

function of the faculty of selection. To bring them within the comprehension of finite beings, all things must be limited. It is because of the nature and character of these limitations that one art, or one science, is distinct from every other. If music were free from the limitations which prescribe its expression to the emotions, or to matters connected more or less directly with the emotions, it would lose much of its force as an emotional expression. Its power as emotional expression rests mainly on the fact that its limitations exclude from its expressiveness matters, which though sometimes an aid, are more often an encumbrance to the emotions. And as limitation is necessary for comprehension so selection is for effective expression. Therefore art progresses as the power of selection increases; which happens with the general increase of knowledge and experience.

The development of music as a means of expression may be said to pass through five different stages, viz.: Pure emotional sound, with no artistic or intellectual selection or control, and therefore, though in some degree expressive, lacking any force or direct aim in its expressiveness; Crude undeveloped art; Art developed mainly upon artificial lines, or mechanical art; "Art for art's sake," which is somewhat the same, but with a deeper and more spiritual beauty than the last; and, its ultimate aim, a complete and forceful means of expression of all emotions and moods.

Although this is what might be called a historical order, it is not necessarily a chronological one; for several of its stages may exist at one and the same time and in a single work. For this reason we have to separate the study of musical expression from our ordinary historical studies, nevertheless coördinating the two at various points and always remembering their correlation. It is one of the weaknesses of the ordinary historians that they have entirely neglected to observe the effect of art, and particularly of music, upon the progress of human life. They have looked upon the arts as being purely ornamental rather than essential to the life, of both the individual and the community. Consequently history as it is now presented is the driest and least useful of studies, and sociology is an infant science, the bulk of whose professors are on the wrong tack. If, as the foregoing considerations seem to indicate, music is one of the essential constituents of human life, neither psychology nor sociology, which are the root sciences of history, will achieve its purpose till both give a full and more scientific recognition to the fact, and employ it accordingly.



## A STUDY OF STRAUSS

By DANIEL GREGORY MASON

### I.

THE chronology of Richard Strauss's artistic life up to the present time arranges itself almost irresistibly in the traditional three periods, albeit in his case the philosophy of these periods has to be rather different from that, say, of Beethoven's. "Discipline, maturity, eccentricity," we say with sufficient accuracy in describing Beethoven's development. The same formula for Strauss will perhaps be tempting to those for whom the perverse element in the *Salome-Elektra* period is the most striking one; but it is safer to say simply: "Music, program music, and music drama." Born in 1864, he produced during his student years, up to 1886, a great quantity of well-made and to some extent personal music, obviously influenced by Mendelssohn, Schumann, and Brahms, and comprising sonatas, quartets, concertos, and a symphony. He himself has told how he then came under the influence of Alexander Ritter, and through him of Wagner, Berlioz, and Liszt; how this influence toward "the poetic, the expressive, in music" acted upon him "like a storm wind"; and how the "*Aus Italien*," written in 1886, is the connecting link between his earlier work and the series of symphonic poems that follows in what I have called the second period. The chief titles and dates of this remarkable series may be itemized here: "*Macbeth*," 1886-7; "*Don Juan*," 1888; "*Tod und Verklärung*," 1889; "*Till Eulenspiegel*" and "*Also Sprach Zarathustra*," 1894; "*Don Quixote*," 1897; "*Ein Heldenleben*," 1898; and the "*Symphonia Domestica*," 1903. The period of program music, containing also, of course, other works such as the operas "*Guntram*" and "*Feuersnot*," innumerable songs, and a violin sonata strayed from the first period, thus lasts from his twenty-second to his thirty-ninth year. Strauss is now fifty-one. He has devoted the past decade chiefly to works for the stage, comprising "*Salome*" (1906), "*Elektra*" (1908), "*Der Rosenkavalier*" (1911), "*Ariadne auf Naxos*," (1913), and "*Josephs Legende*" (1914). His latest work is again in the province of instrumental music—an "*Alpine Symphony*."

This rapid survey of Strauss's creative activity shows that the natural bent of his mind is toward the realistic and dramatic side of his art; it was only in his youth, before he had found himself, that he wrote self-sufficing music; and though lyrical power is shown in many of his songs and in passages of almost all the orchestral works, yet it is on the whole true to say that the essential Strauss is Strauss the dramatist. And if we ask ourselves what are the qualities of temperament requisite to a dramatist, I believe we shall find in Strauss's possession of them in altogether unusual measure the key to his commanding position among the musico-dramatists of our day.

These qualities are the same for a dramatic artist who works in tones as for one who works in words. First of all he must be a man of keen observation, of penetrating intelligence, able to note all that passes about him and to interpret it with something of cold scientific precision. He must be able to seize human types and divine human motives quite different from his own, as they are objectively. He must resist distorting them by reading into them his own impulses and sentiments, as a man of more subjective temperament and less critical detachment always does. In short, he must be of the active rather than the contemplative type, and have a good measure of that faculty of impersonal intellectual curiosity which gives a Shakespeare his supreme power of objective observation.

But though he must not distort others by viewing them through himself, he must nevertheless interpret them through reference to his own feelings, since these are the only feelings with which he is directly acquainted. That is to say, he must be able to place himself, by sympathetic imagination, at the points of view of those he studies. Such sympathetic imagination is so very different a thing from subjective distortion that without it no real understanding of one's fellows is possible at all. The great dramatist needs, then, deep and rich emotion, quite as much as the lyric singer—but emotion ever guided by the sympathy which brings it into play. It is this emotion, guided by sympathetic imagination, that gives the very aspect of life, and its power to move us, to the creation that mere intellectual observation alone could never vitalize.

And finally, the dramatic artist, besides observing keenly and interpreting sympathetically, must view all that he sees with a certain magnanimous many-sidedness, a sort of sweet and mellow wisdom, which is hard to describe but unmistakable when encountered. We find it in all really great creative artists, who seem

to view life not only keenly, not only sympathetically, but also wisely and as if from above, from that vantage point of a wider insight than that of any of their subjects, so that in their summing up of them they are able to set them in proper relation one to another, and by so doing to get a true and calm picture of human life as a whole. This power of philosophic or poetic vision, this magnanimity, we instinctively demand of the artist. It satisfies a fundamental human craving. The moral in the fable is a naïve embodiment of it; it comes even into the uncongenial atmosphere of the light comedy of manners in the rhymed epilogue; its musical incarnation we find in many of the quiet codas of Brahms, or in the thoughtful "Der Dichter spricht" at the end of Schumann's "Kinderscenen."

The object of the present essay is to show that Strauss has, in unequal but high degree, these qualities of the dramatist: observation, sympathy, and magnanimity. The first he has in almost unparalleled measure; the second somewhat fitfully, sometimes inhibited by his ironic cynicism; the third in his most genial moods, as for instance, in the epilogue to "Till Eulenspiegel," but not when misled by over-realistic aims. The evidence of his possession of these qualities that we shall especially look for will be not that afforded by his acts or his sayings, but rather the irrefragable testimony of his musical works themselves.

## II.

Since a man's temperament is what ultimately determines the peculiar combination of qualities making up his artistic individuality—his characteristic powers and shortcomings—the first questions we have to ask ourselves regarding any artist we propose to study will always be: "What is his temperament?" "To which of the two great types does it belong, the active or the contemplative?" "Does its power lie primarily in observation or in introspection?" "Does it impel him towards objective characterization or toward the utterance of subjective feeling?" Elsewhere, in studying these antitheses of temperament in particular cases, such as those of Mendelssohn and Schumann<sup>1</sup>, and of Saint-Saëns and Franck<sup>2</sup>, I have taken occasion to discuss in some detail the rationale of their musical expression. At present our interest is in finding in Strauss a rather extreme case of the active temperament, a man of positively explosive nervous energy.

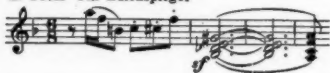
<sup>1</sup>See especially "The Romantic Composers."

<sup>2</sup>In the essays on these composers in "From Grieg to Brahms."

It is only necessary to assemble a few of his characteristic melodic motives to see that this energy naturally translates itself, melodically, into wide erratic skips and incisive abrupt rhythms. Here are a few of them:

Figure I

(a) From "Till Eulenspiegel"

(b) From "Don Juan"  
Allegro molto con brio

(c) From "Ein Heldenleben"



(d) From "Also sprach Zarathustra"



(e) From the "Symphonia Domestica"



The chief theme of the arch mischief-maker, "Till Eulenspiegel," is necessarily capricious, but it is doubtful if even for him anyone but Strauss would have thought of those surprising jumps, landing each time on an unexpected note. In the main theme of "Don Juan" we have a good example of his rhythmic energy. Note the variety of the figures: the sixteenth notes in the first measure, swarming up to the high E; the still further ascending triplet; the even more incisive dotted group leading to the emphatic half notes. In similar general style is the chief theme of "Ein Heldenleben," depicting the hero, but less lithe, more burly and almost awkwardly powerful. The theme of "great longing" from "Also Sprach Zarathustra" conveys its impression through the wide jumps, covering almost three octaves in two vigorous dashes. The theme of "the Wife," from the "Symphonia Domestica," illustrates Strauss's love of turning the unexpected way. Notice the downward jump of a ninth, and the cadence transferred to a higher octave than we expect.

The same story of overflowing nervous energy is told by two other characteristics of Strauss's melody. Like all sanguine natures he has more rising than falling phrases. The buoyancy of (b), (c), and (d) in Figure I is irrepressible; (a) has a falling

curve, somewhat coy; (e) begins in the same wheedling vein, but ends with a rise of self-confident energy. A canvass of all the motives in the symphonic poems would probably demonstrate that seventy-five per cent of them rise in pitch. The second peculiarity is more subtle but even more significant—a preference for “rising” or anacrustic rhythms, culminating in an accented final note after several unaccented ones, to “falling” or thetic rhythms beginning with the heavy part of the measure. The elasticity of the rising rhythm is clearly shown in all the excerpts of Figure I except that from “Ein Heldenleben”; that, naturally, begins doggedly on the down beat. Only a systematic study can show the extent of Strauss’s addiction to the rising rhythm.

These considerations, to which might perhaps be added his preference for the major to the minor mode, and for the vigorous duple to the more subtle triple meter, afford us quite ample internal evidence of his belonging to the temperamental type of the actives, like Mendelssohn and Saint-Saëns (however he may differ from them musically) rather than to that of the contemplatives,—the Schumanns and the Francks. To these positive points we might add negative ones, dealing with his emotional shortcomings. This, indeed, we shall have to do later, in the interest of a just critical estimate; but for the present it will be better worth while to examine the positive results, in the way of keen observation and masterly characterization, of this active-minded interest of Strauss in what lies about him.

### III.

Strauss’s characterization is consummate. Superlatives are dangerous, but probably no other musician has ever carried to such a point the power of music to depict, or at least, to suggest, varieties of character, both in human beings and in inanimate objects. Strauss’s reported remark that music was becoming so definite that we should soon be able to portray a tablespoon so unmistakably that it could be told from the rest of the silverware is probably an instance of his sardonic delight in hoaxing the public; but if anyone is going to subject the art of tones to this curious test, we are all agreed, doubtless, that it should be Strauss himself. Meanwhile, failing a tablespoon, we have a sufficiently varied collection of portraits in his gallery, each sketched with a Sargent-like penetration.

We have seen, for example, in Figure Ia, Till Eulenspiegel the arch mischief-maker, irrepressible, incorrigible. Here, on the

other hand, is Till sentimental, making love to a village maiden, his original insolence tamed into a simpering persuasiveness, his theme, at first so galvanic, now languishing in its plaintive downward droopings.

Figure II. Till in love



Later we see him, repulsed by the maiden, storming in ungovernable fury.<sup>1</sup>

Here, again, belonging to a quite other world, is Don Quixote, "the knight of the sorrowful visage," ageing and broken, yet full of chivalrous and idealistic notions, and thus at once inspiring and pathetic:

Figure III. Don Quixote, the knight of the sorrowful visage



What a contrast is his rascal of a servant, Sancho Panza, good-natured and irresponsible, sauntering through life with a minimum of effort and a maximum of diversion:

Figure IV. Sancho Panza  
Bass Clarinet and Tenor Tuba



We find a somewhat similar principle of contrast, though between very different types of character, in the themes of the husband and the wife in the "Symphonia Domestica." The latter has been cited at Figure Ie. Its suggestion of coy graciousness and feminine charm is due in part to the tender downward in-

<sup>1</sup>The passage, page 13 of the two hand piano arrangement, page 26 of the orchestra score, is too long to quote here.



lections of the opening figure, and partly to the anacrusic rhythm (beginning with unaccented notes). The theme of the husband, with which the work opens, starts out with an "inversion" of this three-note figure of the wife; the motives complementary to each other, so to speak, as if Strauss had wished to suggest the reciprocal relation of marriage. Yet the rising inflection and the falling rhythm of the husband version give it a vigor that completely differentiates it from the other, even if we ignore for the moment the effect of the contrasting keys of F major and B major, a matter of which we shall have more to say presently.

The subtlety of the composer's use of rhythm for characterization can hardly be exaggerated. It almost justifies the extreme detail of his annotator's analyses, as for example of Mr. Wilhelm Klatte's diagnosis of the hero's character in "Ein Heldenleben." This reads like an old-fashioned phrenological chart. Mr. Klatte finds in his hero "a genial nature, emotional and vibratory" (measures 1-6 and 9-12 of the opening theme), a "haughty and firm step" (measures 6-8), and an "indomitable will" (measures 13-16). Furthermore the continuation in B major and A flat, Mr. Klatte tells us, shows that the paragon has "richness of fantasy, warmth and elasticity of feeling, allied with lightness of movement—whose tendency is always towards buoyancy and onward and upward effort, thus imparting an effect of inflexible and well-directed determination instead of low-spirited or sullen obstinacy." Mr. Klatte makes a considerable demand on our powers of credence. Yet we must be reluctant to place limits to a power of rhythm-melodic suggestion that can give us such extremes of opposed character as the naïve innocence of the "Childhood" motive in "Tod und Verklärung," and the degenerate superstition and pathological fear of Herodias, with her eerie whole-tone scale, in "Salome."

Highly characteristic of Strauss, both in its subtle use of rhythm-melodic characterization and in the rather malicious quality of its humor, is the "Science" section in "Also Sprach Zarathustra." This powerful if over-ambitious work deals with a matter that can hardly be put into music, even by Strauss: with the opposition, namely, between the Christian ideal of self-abnegation and Nietzsche's philosophy of self-fulfilment. In this particular section of it Strauss is trying to suggest the dustiness, mustiness, and inconclusiveness of "Science" from the standpoint of the passions; this he does by making a frightfully complicated fugue from his main theme. How slyly does he here satirize science! How to the life does his fugue theme, starting off boldly

in C major and square-cut rhythm, and presently wandering into chromatic harmonies and indecisive triplets, symbolize the initial arrogance and final futility of scholastic systems!

Figure V. "Of Science". Fugue theme from "Also sprach Zarathustra"



In the use of harmony for characterization Strauss is no less skilful than in the more important matters of melody and rhythm. The essential quality of his harmony is perhaps less "ultra-modern" than is sometimes supposed. In spite of the sensational innovations of "Salome" and "Elektra," he is so intensely German in feeling and so well-founded on the German classics that the nucleus of his harmonic system is the diatonic scale, simple and rugged. One thinks of such powerful themes as that of "Transfiguration" or the "Hero" as the essential Strauss. Even "Salome" has its Jochanaan, and the "Symphonia Domestica" is surprisingly diatonic. Strauss is more nearly related to the virile Wagner of "Die Meistersinger" than to that other more sensuous Wagner of "Tristan und Isolde." Of course, there are wondrously expressive chromatic passages in Strauss, as for instance the "Grablied" in "Zarathustra"; but on the whole his musical foundation is tonic-and-dominant, like Mozart's, Beethoven's, and Brahms's.

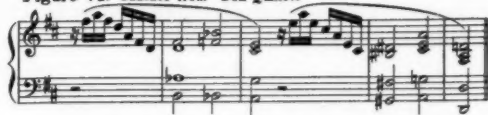
It is in the boldly imaginative and unconventional arrangement of simple material that Strauss gets his most striking harmonic effects. Plain "triads" and "dominant sevenths," the small musical change of hack composers, turn to gold in his hands. The touchingly expressive cadence of Don Quixote's theme will illustrate. The material is of the most ordinary, yet the effect is magical and its dramatic appropriateness surprising. In the words of Mr. Arthur Kahn,<sup>1</sup>

These confused harmonic windings through which the central chords of the previously established key are reached, characterize strikingly the well-known tendency of Don Quixote towards false conclusions. He goes carefully out of the way of natural sequences and palpable facts, in order not to demolish therewith his fancy structures.

<sup>1</sup>Don Quixote, erläutert von Arthur Kahn, Der Musikführer, no. 148, Leipzig.

Strauss has carried this principle of the close juxtaposition of chords more or less foreign to each other, and even of different keys, to greater and greater lengths in his more recent works,

Figure VI. Cadence from "Don Quixote"

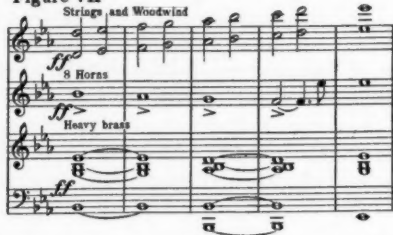


and to the effects of "queerness" which result when these foreign tonal groups quickly follow each other, and of more or less extreme dissonance when they occur simultaneously, he owes much of the violently adverse criticism to which he has been subjected. Indeed, nothing has more retarded his general acceptance than these abrupt transitions and unaccustomed discordancies. The matter is of sufficient importance to intelligent appreciation of him to justify a brief digression here. For any composer who conceives music as a number of melodies proceeding together in greater or less amity, but preserving the measure of independence that individuality and vigorous movement demand—and Strauss is to a peculiar degree such a polyphonic composer—a certain amount of physical harshness at moments when the melodies happen to clash is not only unavoidable but positively desirable, as tending to throw each into relief. According to the degree of his experience the listener follows the composer in this respect: that is, he accepts with something more than passive endurance, yes, with active pleasure, the physically disagreeable clashes (dissonances) which by setting off the differing contours of the melodies emphasize for him their mental and emotional appeal; but not—and the point is of prime importance to the would-be music-lover—not if he does not follow the melodies, that is, not if he cannot hear consecutively as well as moment by moment—for it is only by following the threads, so to speak, that we can untangle the knots. Accordingly most untrained listeners dislike, probably, music that contains many of these knots, the presence of which make it so interesting and exciting to the experienced ear. The woman who confessed to her piano teacher that she did not like Bach's Two-part Inventions because they were so "ugly" was not less cultivated but only more frank than many who have not discovered that Bach has to be heard "horizontally" (to borrow a figure from musical notation) rather than "vertically."

This gift of horizontal hearing is peculiarly necessary to anyone who would disentangle the tonal knots in which Strauss delights,

working as he does with many more than two voices and with the vast fund of harmonic possibilities accumulated since Bach's day to draw upon. And he is not the man to use his resources timidly, or to make any concessions to laziness or inexperience in his listeners. Here is a reduction of a passage from "Ein Heldenleben" to its essential elements:

Figure VII



The heavy brass gives the foundation harmonies; the strings and woodwind have an upward-moving melody, and the eight horns blare forth at the same time a slower-moving downward melody. If we read almost any single chord vertically, we shall find it has its measure of harshness, sometimes considerable. If we listen to the coherent voices, none of these dissonances will trouble us in the least. This is a very simple example of what Strauss is constantly doing in a far more complex way.<sup>1</sup>

It is a real difficulty in the way of Strauss' appreciation that while only familiarity can enable us to follow the intricate windings of the threads that make up his gorgeously rich fabrics, frequent hearings of his later and more complex symphonic poems are not to be had, even in the large cities. In the meanwhile we have no recourse but piano arrangements, unsatisfactory for two reasons. In the first place, it is physically impossible to play with two hands even a respectable fraction of the melodies that Strauss delights to elaborate for two hundred; and four-hand versions are better only in degree, not in kind. Secondly, piano versions fail us precisely in this matter of unravelling dissonance, since by reducing a colored pattern to monochrome they diminish the salience of the lines we are trying to follow, and by juxtaposing in one tone-quality tones that in the orchestra are softened by difference of timbre they notably increase the physical harshness

<sup>1</sup>The jump of the horns in the fourth measure illustrates another obstacle to understanding that the inexperienced listener often meets in Strauss. He is quite careless as to what register, high or low, the "resolutions" of his dissonances occur in; they jump about from octave to octave; and the hearer, to follow them, has to be equally agile.

of the combinations. Obviously, then, we must be exceedingly chary of condemning Strauss, or any other composer, for orchestral dissonance that we have either become acquainted with insufficiently, or only through piano arrangements.

After making these subtractions, however, there undoubtedly remain many puzzling clashes of tone in Strauss's scores. I believe that some of these can be accounted for only as introduced either for color or for dramatic expression.

The use of dissonance for the sake of color enrichment is a familiar proceeding in modern music, especially in that of impressionistic type like Debussy's and Ravel's. Such use is essentially decorative. To a more or less clearly defined harmonic nucleus are added softer tones, clashing with it, and thus forming about it an aura or atmosphere which I have elsewhere compared to to the mist which softens the outlines of the landscape.<sup>1</sup> Strauss is too fond of clear outline and solid mass to employ these impressionistic methods habitually, or even frequently; but when he does, it is with his usual skill and daring. The theme of the silver rose in "Der Rosenkavalier" is the inevitable example: the last pages of the score are crowded with those silvery, scarcely audible triads of celesta and flutes, shifting and settling on the stronger G major chord like snowflakes on a leaf:

Figure VIII. The silver rose motive, from "Der Rosenkavalier"



Delicious as are these shimmerings, a use of dissonance on the whole more characteristic of the masculine nature of Strauss is the harsher, more insistent juxtaposition of clashing tones for the sake of their potency in the expression of the tragic, the gruesome, or the abnormal. Naturally this is pushed furthest in the treatment of such pathological subjects as "Salome" and "Elektra," where its effect is carefully enhanced by contrast with strong or clear consonant harmonies—"Salome" has its Jochanaan and "Elektra" its Chrysothemis. The close juxtaposition of foreign tone groups, either successive or simultaneous, is carried to great lengths in these operas. The theme of the chattering Jews in "Salome" is an example of the successive, as

<sup>1</sup>Essay on Chopin, in "The Romantic Composers."

is the curious succession of the chords of F minor and B minor at Chrysothemis' entrance in "Elektra."<sup>1</sup>

The simultaneous kind was foreshadowed in the famous ending of "Also Sprach Zarathustra," where the woodwind instruments sound the chord of B major against the softly plucked C of the strings; but we have to go to the operas again to find it carried to its logical and sometimes cruel extreme. There we find alien triads marching uneasily together in double harness<sup>2</sup>; dominant sevenths similarly shackled<sup>3</sup>; and strange passages in which the upper parts move naturally, but above a dislocated bass<sup>4</sup>. Such procedures, which, it must always be remembered, sound far less harsh in the orchestra than on the piano, even if they are no less queer musically, can theoretically be carried to any extent. How far Strauss sometimes carries them, a single example must suffice to show.

Figure IX. Passage from "Elektra," vocal score, page 83



Whether one "likes" such passages as this or not is of course a question of taste. But one thing at least is certain: it will not do to charge Strauss with mere musical anarchy in writing them—his work as a whole shows too keen a sense of the traditional harmonic values. That aesthetic insensibility, posing as "freedom from rules," "independence," "liberalism," and the like, to which in the mind of so many modern composers all keys are the same, as the Germans say that at night all cows are black, is not one of his failings. That he has the keenest possible sense of the individual qualities of the different keys, and of the structural importance of their interrelationships, each one of his long series of symphonic poems has by its masterly design shown afresh. How remarkable, for example, is the antitheses of C, minor and major, and B, minor and major, which is the constructive principle of "Also Sprach Zarathustra!" How interesting is the choice of F major for the easy-going husband in the "Symphonía Domestica," and of the keener, more brilliant B major for the wife! And

<sup>1</sup>Vocal score, page 35.

<sup>2</sup>"Elektra," vocal score, page 21.

<sup>3</sup>*Ibid.* Page 23.

<sup>4</sup>*Ibid.* Page 20, the first line.



how this strong tonal sense not only guides the design as a whole, but suggests endless charming and imaginative details! At the end of the lullaby, in the same work, when the child has fallen asleep and the music has sunk to a tranquil G minor chord, this quietude is irradiated by a flash of B major and three notes of the wife-theme,—the loving tenderness of the waking and watching mother over the sleeping infant. Twice this happens, and each time the somnolent G minor returns. Thus does genius use tonality.

Being thus brought back to consider how Strauss uses all the elements of music, even this subtlest one of contrasting tonalities, in the interest of characterization, I must cite from a friend one final interpretation which might seem over-ingenious had we not the example of Mr. Klatte to spur our critical imaginations. Why is it that we so seldom hear the four tones of Till Eulenspiegel's main theme on any other degrees of the scale than A, F, B, C? Why is it that, in spite of the constant movement from key to key of the music, this theme is hardly ever carried also into the new key?<sup>1</sup> Why does Strauss so insist on this A, F, B, C, not only when the music is in F major, but when, as at Till's anger, it is in D minor, when, as in the procession of the burghers, it is in A minor, and when, just before the return of the main theme, it is in C major? Why always A, F, B, C, whatever the key? Is it not because Till, half-witted, perverse, self-imprisoned, is not subject to social influences, and remains unplastically himself, whatever his environment? To transpose a theme into the key prevailing at the moment is to make order—but Till represents disorder. . . . Such at least is the ingenious explanation of a woman who understands character as well as Strauss understands keys.

#### IV.

All that we have been saying so far has concerned itself primarily with Strauss's powers of observation and characterization; we have noted how broad a field of human character he covers, and what varied artistic resources he brings to its depiction; we have seen how peculiarly fitted he is for this part of his work by his active temperament, with its accompanying intellectual alertness and freedom from self-consciousness. But we saw that the great dramatist needs not only observation but sympathy, in order that his work may be as moving as it is vivid;

<sup>1</sup>It is transposed into B flat in the episode wherein Till dons the vestments of a priest.

and in this power of emotion we may at first be inclined to consider Strauss deficient. There is undoubtedly a popular superstition which puts him among the intellectuals. The clean-cut efficiency of his personality, his businesslike habits, his mordant wit, both in words and in notes (was there ever anything so witty as "Till Eulenspiegel"?), even questionably relevant details like his exquisitely neat hand writing and his well-groomed and not in the least long-haired appearance,—all these create the impression of a personality by no means *schwärmerisch*, far removed indeed from the rapt dreamer who is the school-girl's ideal composer.

There is, I think, a measure of truth in this picture. Many of Strauss's most characteristic merits, as well as defects, may be traced to his lack of the introspective tendency which has been so fundamental in most of the other great German musicians, from Bach to Wagner, and which is seen perhaps at its purest and best in Schumann. Strauss is at the other pole from Schumann—and music is wide! Mr. Ernest Newman, in the ablest studies of Strauss yet published in English,<sup>1</sup> points to the internal evidence of this lack in his earliest and therefore least sophisticated compositions. "The general impression one gets from all these works," writes Mr. Newman, "is that of a head full to overflowing with music, a temperament that is energetic and forthright rather than warm. . . , and a general lack not only of young mannish sentimentality, but of sentiment. There is often a good deal of ardour in the writing, but it is the ardour of the intellect rather than of the emotions." And again: "Wherever the youthful Strauss has to sing rather than declaim, when he has to be emotional rather than intellectual, as in his slow movements, he almost invariably fails. . . . He feels it hard to squeeze a tear out of his unclouded young eyes, to make those taut, whip-cord young nerves of his quiver with emotion."<sup>2</sup>

Now, although Mr. Newman would not accept his own description of Strauss the youth as a fair account of the mature composer, although, indeed, he specifically insists, in a later passage, that Strauss's musical imagination lost, at adolescence, its "first metallic hardness" and "softened into something more purely emotional," yet I think his vivid phrases give us a picture of Strauss that is in essentials as true at fifty as it was at fifteen. "A temperament that is energetic and forthright rather than warm," "an ardour of the intellect rather than of the emotions"—

<sup>1</sup>"Richard Strauss," in the *Living Masters of Music Series*, and "Richard Strauss and the Music of the Future," in "Musical Studies."

<sup>2</sup>"Richard Strauss," page 30-32.

these are surely still Straussian characteristics. And what is more they are characteristics that, whatever their dangers, have exerted a splendid influence in modern music. Schumann's was a noble introspection that no one who knows it can help loving; but in natures less pure the introspective habit of German romanticism has not always been so happy in its effects. An unhealthy degree of self-contemplation tends to substitute futile or morbid imaginings for the solid realities of life; the over-introspective artist cuts himself off from a large arc of experience and is prone to exaggerate the importance of the more intimate sentiments, and when, as in German romanticism, such a tendency is widespread, a whole school may become febrile and erotic. The vapors of such confirmed sentimentalism can best be dispersed by a ray of clear, cold intelligence, such as Shaw plays through contemporary literature and Strauss through contemporary music. "Cynicism," says Stevenson, "is the cold tub and bath towel of the emotions, and absolutely necessary to life in cases of advanced sensibility." Strauss has administered this tonic shock to us, immersed as we were in the langours of the Wagnerian boudoir. He has rooted us out of our agreeable reveries, sent us packing outdoors, and made us gasp with the stinging impacts of crude existence and the tingling lungfuls of fresh air. Is it not worth while, for this vigorous life, to sacrifice a few subtle nuances of feeling?

If then we so emphasize his possession of the active rather than the contemplative temperament, it is not to blame him for not being a Schumann, but to render as precise as possible in our own minds the notion of what it is to be a Strauss. If there is a point where blame or regret must mingle with our appreciation, it will come, I think, not at the preliminary determination of what his temperament is, but at the further discovery of certain extremes to which, as it seems to me, he has allowed his interest in externals to carry him, especially in his later work. And here, though I should be glad to avoid the controversial, I must try to set right a misconception with which Mr. Newman seems to me to leave the student of his essay on "Program Music."<sup>1</sup>

## V.

Mr. Newman, wishing to draw a reasoned distinction between self-sufficing, or "pure," or "abstract" music—that is, music that makes its appeal directly and without the aid of any verbal tag—and "poetic" music, or, more specifically, music with a definite

<sup>1</sup>In "Musical Studies."

program or title, adopts, seemingly without criticism, the popular notion that the first is less "emotional" than the second, and supports it by piling up epithets which beg the very question he is supposed to be examining. It is easy to "damn a dog by giving him a bad name," and it is easy to make music without program seem a dry and academic affair by calling it "abstract note-spinning," "mathematical music," "mere formal harmony," "embroidery," "juggling," "the arousing of pleasure in beautiful forms"—much too easy for a man of Mr. Newman's penetration and fair-mindedness. One expects this kind of thing from inexperienced youths whose enthusiasm has been inflamed by the gorgeous color and the easily grasped "story" of such a work as, let us say, Tschaikowsky's "Romeo and Juliet," who have not had time to live themselves into accord with the profound emotional life of the great musical classics such as Bach's fugues and Beethoven's symphonies; but from Mr. Newman such superficialities, especially when they are associated, as these are, with many penetrating and true observations, and an argument in the main convincing, come as a surprise.

The central fallacy that vitiates Mr. Newman's conclusions seems to me to lurk in his assumption that "specific reference to actual life" necessarily means greater emotion, and that the generality or "abstractness" of classic music is a symptom of emotional deficiency. "In the old symphony or sonata," says Mr. Newman, "a succession of notes, pleasing in itself but not having specific reference to actual life—not attempting, *that is*, [the italics are mine] to get at very close quarters with strong emotional or dramatic expression, but influencing and affecting us mainly by reason of its purely formal relations and by the purely physical pleasure inherent in it as sound—was stated, varied, worked out and combined with other themes of the same order. . . ." And again: "The opening phrase of Beethoven's 8th Symphony refers to nothing at all external to itself; it is what Herbert Spencer has called the music of pure exhilaration; to appreciate it you have to think of nothing but itself; the pleasure lies primarily in the way the notes are put together." To this a footnote is appended: "There is emotion, of course, at the back of the notes; the reader will not take me to mean that the pleasure is merely physical, like a taste or an odour. But the emotive wave is relatively small and very vague; it neither comes directly from nor suggests any external existence." Once more, you see, the assumption that degree of emotion is in a direct ratio with externality of suggestion.

But as a matter of fact is not the exact opposite the truth? Are we not most deeply moved when we are lifted clean out of the concrete and carried up to the universal of which it is only an example? Is not the general far more moving than the particular? Do we not feel external details to be irrelevant and even annoyingly intrusive when we are stirred to the recognition of inward truths, of spiritual realities? No doubt program music owes to its reference to the particular story, the well-known hero, the familiar book or picture, a certain vividness, an immediateness of appeal even to the unmusical, a rich fund of associations to draw upon; but even program music, I think, tends in all its more powerful moments to penetrate below this comparatively superficial layer of external facts to the profounder (and of course vaguer) emotional strata of which they are, so to speak, the outcroppings. It is odd how little difference there is between program music and music, without the tag, in their more inspired moments; in all symphonic poems it is the symphonic rather than the poetic element that is chiefly responsible for the effect produced; and indeed, increasingly realistic as Strauss has become in his later works, even here, I think, the memorable moments are those of emotional fulfilment and realization, in which we tacitly agree to let the program go hang. Far from the "emotive wave" being proportional to the suggestion of "external existence," then, I should say that it was rather proportional to the realization of universal spiritual truth, and that in systematically confronting us with ever more and more crassly external existences Strauss has in his later works followed a practice as questionable as the theory which supports it, and levied an ever greater tax of boredom on our joy in the finer moments of his art.

Even in "Tod und Verklärung," which remains to this day, in the words of M. Romain Rolland,<sup>1</sup> "one of the most moving works of Strauss, and that which is constructed with the noblest unity," the repulsively realistic details with which the gasping for breath of the dying man is pictured consort but incongruously with the tender beauty of the "childhood" passages and the broad grandeur of the "transfiguration." The love of crass realism thus early revealed has grown apace, by even steps, unfortunately, with the extraordinary powers upon which it is parasitic. In the works conceived partially in a spirit of comedy, to be sure, such as "Till Eulenspiegel" and "Don Quixote," it finds a whimsical, witty expression for itself which not only seldom strikes a false

<sup>1</sup>Musiciens d'aujourd'hui, page 123.

note, but is often exceedingly amusing. Till's charge among the market-women's pots and pans, the bleating of the sheep in "Don Quixote," even perhaps the baby's squalling in the "Symphonia Domestica," are clever bits of side play, like the "business" of an irrepressible comedian, which are not out of key with the main substance of the music. But even here these realistic touches are exuberances, and inessential; the essential thing in "Till," for example, is the spirit of mischief and destruction that existed in the human heart for centuries before the rascal Eulenspiegel was born, and that respond in us to his pranks; and this essence Strauss expresses in the purely musical parts of his work, and by means identical in kind with those employed in a Beethoven scherzo.

And if realistic detail is in such instance subordinate to musical expression it may in the treatment of more serious subjects become positively inimical to it. Do we really care very much about supermen and "convalescents" and the rival claims of Christianity and neo-paganism when we are listening to "Also Sprach Zarathustra"? Does not that everlasting C-G-C, with its insistence on an esoteric meaning that we never knew or have forgotten, pester us unnecessarily? What we remember in "Zarathustra" is much more likely to be the poignant passion of the "Grablied," or the beautiful broad melody of the violins, in B major, near the end, which bears no label at all save the tempo mark "Langsam." Similarly, in the "Symphonia Domestica" the family squabbles, growling father giving the repique to bawling infant, leave us skeptically detached or mildly amused. It is the musical charm of the "easy going" parts in F major, the cradle song, above all the largely conceived slow movement with its wonderful development of the husband's "dreamy" theme, that really stir us. As for "Ein Heldenleben," what an unmitigated bore are those everlasting Adversaries!

Thus in the later works it seems to me that Strauss's shortcomings on the subjective side, his native tendency to concern himself more with concrete appearances than with essential emotional truths, have been exaggerated to such a degree as seriously to disturb the balance of his art. As he has interested himself more and more in externals he has not entirely evaded the danger of exalting the "program" at the expense of the "music," and his work, for all its extraordinary brilliance, its virtuosity, its power, has become over-emphatic, ill-balanced, hard in finish and theatrical in emphasis. It is ultimately a spiritual defect that compels us to withhold our full admiration from "Ein Heldenleben" or the "Domestica." We admit their titanic



power, their marvellous nervous vitality; their technical temerities grow for the most part acceptable with familiarity; it is their emotional unreality that disappoints us. This charge of unreality, made against realism, may surprise us, may seem to savor of paradox; but it is inevitable. For music, as we have been told *ad nauseam*, but as we must never be allowed to forget, exists to express feeling; the only truth essential to it is truth to emotion; and therefore realism, looking as it does away from inward emotion to external fact, ever tends toward musical unreality.

How shall we account for this progressive externalising of Strauss's musical interest? Is it all temperament? Has environment had anything to do with it? Do those high-sounding but dubious things "modern German materialism" and its accompanying aesthetic "decadence" bear in any way upon the matter? These are questions too large for a humble annalist of music to answer. M. Romain Rolland, however, in his essay on French and German Music in "Musiciens d'aujourd'hui," has one suggestion too relevant to be neglected here. "German music" says M. Rolland, "loses from day to day its intimateness: there is some of it still in Wolf, thanks to the exceptional misfortunes of his life; there is very little of it in Mahler, despite his efforts to concentrate himself upon himself; there is hardly any of it in Strauss, although he is the most interesting of the three. They no longer have any depth. I have said that I attribute this fact to the detestable influence of the theatre, to which almost all these artists are attached, as Kapellmeisters, directors of opera, etc. They owe to it the often melodramatic or at least external character of their music—music on parade, thinking constantly of effect."

One hesitates to accept so damning a charge as this against any artist, especially against a musical artist, who above all others should render sincere account of what is in his own heart rather than "give the public what it wants." Yet there is only too much in the later Strauss that it explains. How else shall we account for the exaggerated emphasis, the over-elaboration of contrasts that seem at times almost mechanical, and that suggest shrewd calculation of the crowd psychology rather than free development of the musical thought? What else explains so well the sensational elements so incredibly childish in an art so mature as Strauss's: the ever-increasing noisiness, the introduction of wind-machines, thunder-machines, and heaven knows what diabolic engines; the appetite for novelty for novelty's sake? And is there not a reflection of the "saponaceous influences of opera," as Sir Hubert Parry so well calls them, in the cloying over-sweetness,

the sensuous luxury, of those peculiar passages, like the oboe solo in "Don Juan," the love music in "Ein Heldenleben," which form such conventional spots in the otherwise vital tissue of the music? Surely the opera house, and not the concert hall, is the place where such sybaritisms naturally breed.

For one reason and another, then—temperament, environment, the enervation of the operatic atmosphere with its constant quest of "effect"—the fresh and vital elements in Strauss's art have not entirely escaped contamination by more stale, conventional, and specious ones. Particularly has he failed of his highest achievement, it seems to me, when desire for immediate appeal, the bias of an over-active mind, or the fallacies of a one-sided aesthetic have led him too far from the subjective emotion which is truly the soul of music. Yet when all subtractions are made he must remain one of the great creative musicians of his day. His surprising vigor and trenchancy of mind, his wit, his sense of comedy (in the Meredithian use of the word), his unerring eye for character, and, at his best, his sympathetic interpretation of life and his broad grasp of its significance as a whole, combine to produce a unique personality. Some of the eloquence we find in the more pompous parts of "Zarathustra" or "Ein Heldenleben" posterity will probably dismiss as bombast; but posterity will be stupid indeed if it does not prize "Till Eulenspiegel" and "Don Quixote" as master expressions of the spirit of comedy in music. "Till Eulenspiegel" particularly is a well-nigh perfect blending of the three qualities of the master dramatist we began by discussing. It combines the observation of a Swift with the sympathetic imagination of a Thackeray. Beneath its turbulent surface of fun is a deep sense of pathos, of the fragmentariness and fleetingness of Till, for all his pranks; so that to the sensitive it may easily bring tears as well as smiles. Above all, it has that largeness of vision, rarest of artistic qualities, which not only penetrates from appearance to feeling, but grasps feeling in all its relations, presents a unified picture of life, and purges the emotions as the Greek tragedy aimed to do. All is suffused in beauty. The prologue, "Once upon a time there was a man": and the epilogue, "Thus it happened to Till Eulenspiegel" make a complete cycle of the work, and remove its expression to a philosophic or poetic plane high above mere crude realism. There are doubtless more impressive single passages in later works, but it may be doubted if anything Strauss has ever written is more perfect or more tender than this wittiest of pieces, in which the wit is yet forgotten in the beauty.

## AN EIGHTEENTH CENTURY ESSAYIST ON POETRY AND MUSIC

By W. H. GRATTAN FLOOD

IN the year 1778 there was published at Edinburgh a remarkable volume by James Beattie, LL.D., Professor of Moral Philosophy and Logic in the Marischal College and University of Aberdeen, entitled: "Essays on Poetry and Music, as they affect the mind; on Laughter and Ludicrous Composition; on the Utility of Classical Learning." I have no intention of dealing with the two latter sections, but I think that a summary of the essays on Poetry and Music may prove of interest to twentieth-century readers. First, however, it may well be to give a brief sketch of the life of Dr. Beattie, whose writings once had a considerable vogue.

James Beattie was born at Lawrencekirk, a village in Kincardine (Scotland), on October 25th, 1735, and, after the usual primary education at the village school, entered Marischal College, Aberdeen, in 1749, obtaining a valuable scholarship. In 1753 he was appointed schoolmaster of the parish school of Fordoun at the foot of the Grampians, where he formed the acquaintance of Lord Monboddo. Three years later he was elected to the Ushership of Aberdeen Grammar School, and, in 1760, he was appointed Professor of Moral Philosophy and Logic in Marischal College. Between the years 1760 and 1770 he published several essays and some poems, including the "Essay on Truth" and the "Minstrel," followed by "Essays on Poetry and Music" in 1778. In 1773 he obtained a pension of £200, and the University of Oxford granted him the honorary degree of LL.D. From 1790 to 1799 he was in a most precarious state of health, and he died on August 18th, 1803.

Prefixed to the "Essays on Poetry and Music" is a note by Dr. Beattie, in which he informs the public that they were written in the year 1762, and were read at a private literary society. Having been examined in manuscript by "some learned persons in England," the author, at the desire of the said learned persons, revised the Essays, and published them in 1778.

The first five chapters deal solely with Poetry and are therefore outside the scope of the present article. Chapter the Sixth

is devoted to Music, and is divided into three Sections, which we shall take *seriatim*.

In Section I an enquiry is made: "Is Music an Imitative Art?" Section II is devoted to a consideration of "How are the pleasures we derive from Music to be accounted for?" Section III. is concerned with "Conjectures on some peculiarities of National Music."

After a preamble on the subject of Imitation as a plentiful source of pleasure, and of the high estimation in every enlightened age of "the imitative arts of poetry and painting, Dr. Beattie proceeds to the examination of Music as an Imitative art:

Shall I say that some melodies please, because they imitate Nature, and that others, which do not imitate Nature, are therefore displeasing?—that an air expressive of devotion, for example, is agreeable, because it presents us with an imitation of those sounds by which devotion does naturally express itself? Such an affirmation would hardly pass upon the reader, notwithstanding the plausibility it might seem to derive from that strict analogy which all the fine arts are supposed to bear to one another. He would ask, What is the natural sound of devotion? Where is it to be heard? What resemblance is there between Handel's *Te Deum* and the tone of voice natural to a person expressing, by articulate sound, his veneration of the Divine Character and Providence?—In fact, I apprehend, that critics have erred a little in their determinations upon this subject, from an opinion that Music, Painting, and Poetry are all imitative arts. I hope at least I may say, without offence, that while this was my opinion, I was always conscious of some unaccountable confusion of thought, whenever I attempted to explain it in the way of detail to others.

But while I thus insinuate, that Music is not an imitative art, I mean no disrespect to Aristotle, who seems in the beginning of his *Poetics* to declare the contrary. It is not the whole, but the *greater part* of music, which that philosopher calls Imitative; and I agree with him so far as to allow this property to some music, though not to all. But he speaks of the *ancient* music, and I of the *modern*; and to one who considers how very little we know of the former, it will not appear a contradiction to say, that the one might have been imitative, though the other is not.

Nor do I mean any disrespect to music, when I would strike it off the list of imitative arts. And, I am satisfied that, though musical genius may subsist without poetical taste, and poetical genius without musical taste; yet, these two talents united might accomplish nobler effects, than either could do singly. I acknowledge, too, that the principles and essential rules of this art are as really founded in nature, as those of poetry and painting. But when I am asked, what part of nature is imitated in Handel's *Water-Music*, for instance, or in Corelli's *Eighth Concerto*, or in any particular English song or Scotch tune, I find I can give no definite answer.

But between imitation in music and imitation in painting there is this one essential difference:—a bad picture is always a bad imitation

of nature, and a good picture is necessarily a good imitation; but music may be exactly imitative, and yet intolerably bad; or not at all imitative, and yet perfectly good. I have heard that the *Pastorale*—in the eighth of Corelli's Concertos (which appears by the inscription to have been composed for the night of the Nativity) was intended for an imitation of the song of angels hovering above the fields of Bethlehem, and gradually soaring up to heaven. The music, however, is not such as would of itself convey this idea; and even with the help of the commentary, it requires a lively fancy to connect the various movements and melodies of the piece with the motions and evolutions of the heavenly host. It is not clear that the author intended any imitation; and whether he did or not, is a matter of no consequence; for the music will continue to please, when the tradition is no more remembered.

Sounds in themselves can imitate nothing directly but sounds, nor in their motions any thing but motions. But the natural sounds and motions that music is allowed to imitate are but few. . . . Now, all the affections, over which music has any power, are of the agreeable kind. And, therefore, in this art, no imitations of natural sound or motions but such as tend to inspire agreeable affections, ought ever to find a place. The song of certain birds, the murmur of a stream, the shouts of multitudes, the tumult of a storm, the roar of thunder, or a chime of bells, are sounds connected with agreeable or sublime affections, and reconcileable both with melody and harmony; and may therefore be imitated, when the artist has occasion for them: but the crowing of cocks, the barking of dogs, the mewing of cats, the grunting of swine, the gabbling of geese, the cackling of a hen, the braying of an ass, the creaking of a saw, or the rumbling of a cartwheel, would render the best music ridiculous. The movement of a dance may be imitated, or the stately pace of an embattled legion; but the hobble of a trotting horse would be intolerable.

There is another sort of imitation by sound, which ought never to be heard, or seen, in music. To express the local elevation of objects by what we call *high* notes, and their depression by *low* notes, has no more propriety in it than any other pun. We call notes *high* or *low*, with respect of their situation in the written scale. There would have been no absurdity in expressing the highest notes by characters placed at the bottom of the scale or musical line, and the lowest notes by characters placed at the top of it, if custom or accident had so determined. And there is reason to think that something like this actually obtained in the musical scale of the ancients. At least it is probable that the deepest or gravest sound was called *Summa* by the Romans, and the shrillest or acutest *Ima*; which might be owing to the construction of their instruments. Yet some people would think a song faulty, if the word *heaven* was set to what we call a low note, or the word *hell* to what we call a high one.

All these sorts of illicit imitations have been practised, and by those, too, from whom better things were expected. This abuse of a noble art did not escape the satire of Swift; who, though deaf to the charms of music, was not blind to the absurdity of musicians. He recommended it to Dr. Echlín, an ingenious gentleman of Ireland, to compose a *Cantata* in ridicule of this puerile mimicry. Here we have

*motions* imitated, which are the most inharmonious, and the least connected with human affections—as the *trotting*, *ambling*, and *galloping* of Pegasus: and sounds the most unmusical, as *crackling* and *sniveling*, and *rough roystering rustic roaring strains*: the words *high* and *deep* have high and deep notes set to them; a series of short notes of equal lengths are introduced, to imitate *shivering* and *shaking*; an irregular rant of quick sounds, to express *rambling*; a sudden rise of the voice, from a low to a high pitch, to denote *flying above the sky*; a ridiculous run of chromatic divisions on the words *Celia dies*; with other droll contrivances of a like nature. In a word, Swift's Cantata alone may convince any person, that music uniformly imitative would be ridiculous. I just observe in passing, that the satire of this piece is levelled, not at absurd imitation only, but also at some other musical improprieties, such as the idle repetition of the same words, the running of long, extravagant divisions upon one syllable, and the setting of words to music that have no meaning.

Dr. Beattie unfortunately does not give his readers the musical setting of Swift's *Cantata*, which he describes so graphically, and therefore I am glad to be able to reproduce here the vocal score which is to be found in George Faulkner's edition of Swift, and in Scott's edition (VOL. XIX), and which is also known as "In harmony would you excel," from the opening lines of the satirical cantata.

Dr. Beattie goes on to suggest that no imitation should ever be introduced into purely instrumental music—whether into a *Concerto*, or into an instrumental *Solo*. However, as regards the latter, that is *Solos*, he adds:—

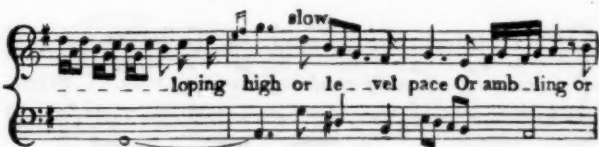
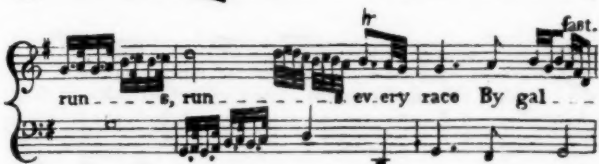
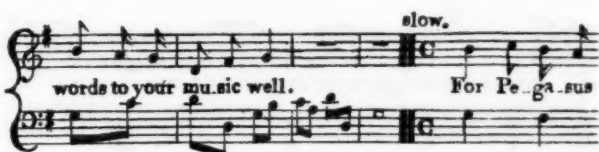
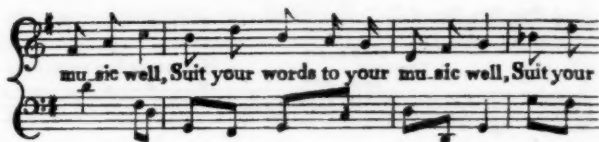
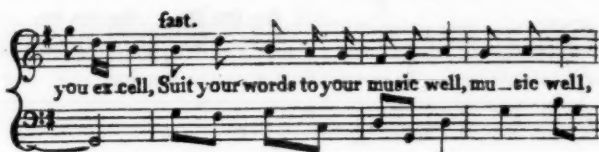
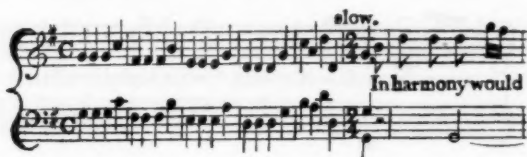
If they be contrived only to show the dexterity of the performer, imitations, and all possible varieties of sound, may be thrown in *ad libitum*; but to such fiddling or fingering I would no more give the honourable name of Music, than I would apply that of Poetry to Pope's "Fluttering spread thy purple pinions" or to Swift's "Ode on Ditton and Whiston."

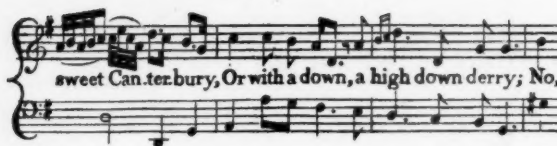
Here I take the opportunity of pointing out a slip by Dr. Beattie in ascribing "Fluttering spread thy purple pinions" to Pope. This song was written by Dean Swift in 1733, and was entitled "A Love Song: in the modern taste," a lyric of eight stanzas. Present-day readers may care to see Swift's satirical song, and, therefore, I subjoin the first verse with the music by a nameless composer, as published in 1733.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>A year later, circa 1734, a different setting was published by Mr. Butler; a third setting—totally different from either—by J. Alcock, Organist of Newark-on-Trent, appeared in the *Universal Museum* for July, 1764, while a fourth effort—to music adopted from A. Scarlatti—was printed in *Exshaw's Magazine* for 1785.

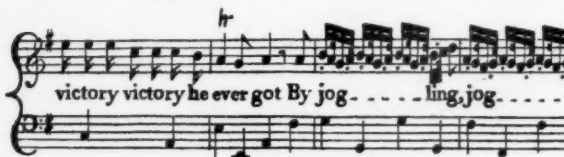


# A Cantata





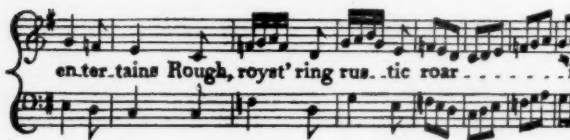
sweet Can.terbury, Or with a down, a high down derry; No,



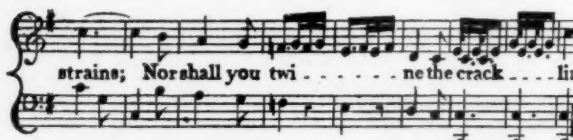
victory victory he ever got By jog - - - ling, jog - - -



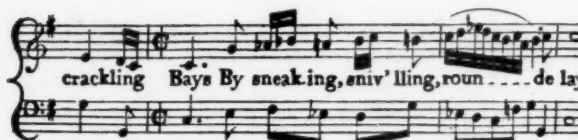
jog - - - ling trot, No muse har.mon.i



en.ter.tains Rough, royst' ring rus. tic roar - - -

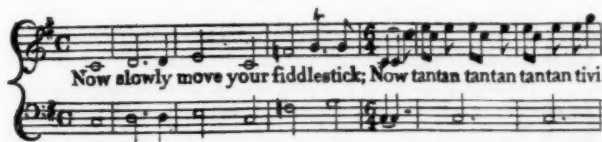


strains; Nor shall you twi - - - ne the crack - - - li



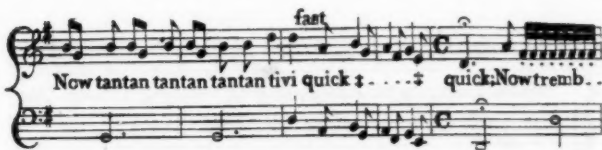
crackling Bays By sneak.ing, eniv' ling, roun - - - de la'

ry; No, no



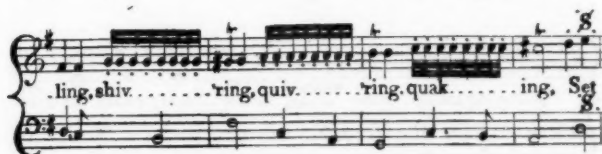
Now slowly move your fiddlestick; Now tantan tantan tantan tiva

ling




Now tantan tantan tantan tiva *fast* quick & . . . quick; Now tremb..

monious



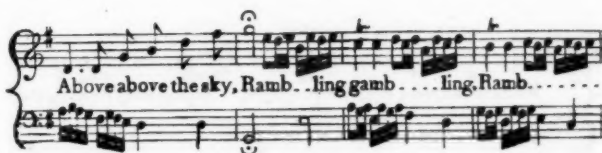
ling, shiv. . . . ring, quiv. . . . ring, quak. . . . ing, Set

ing



hoping, hoping, hoping hearts of lovers akeing. Fly, fly.

ling



Above above the sky, Ramb. ling gamb. ling Ramb. . . .

de lays.



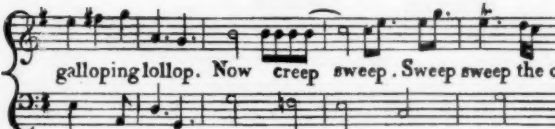
ling gambling.



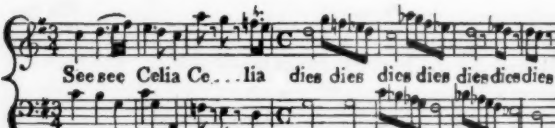
Trolloping lolloping galloping trolloping Lolloping gallop



trollop. Lolloping trolloping galloping lolloping. Trollop.



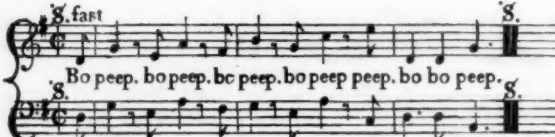
galloping lollop. Now creep sweep. Sweep sweep the c



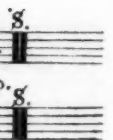
See see Celia Ce... lia dies dies dies dies dies dies dies

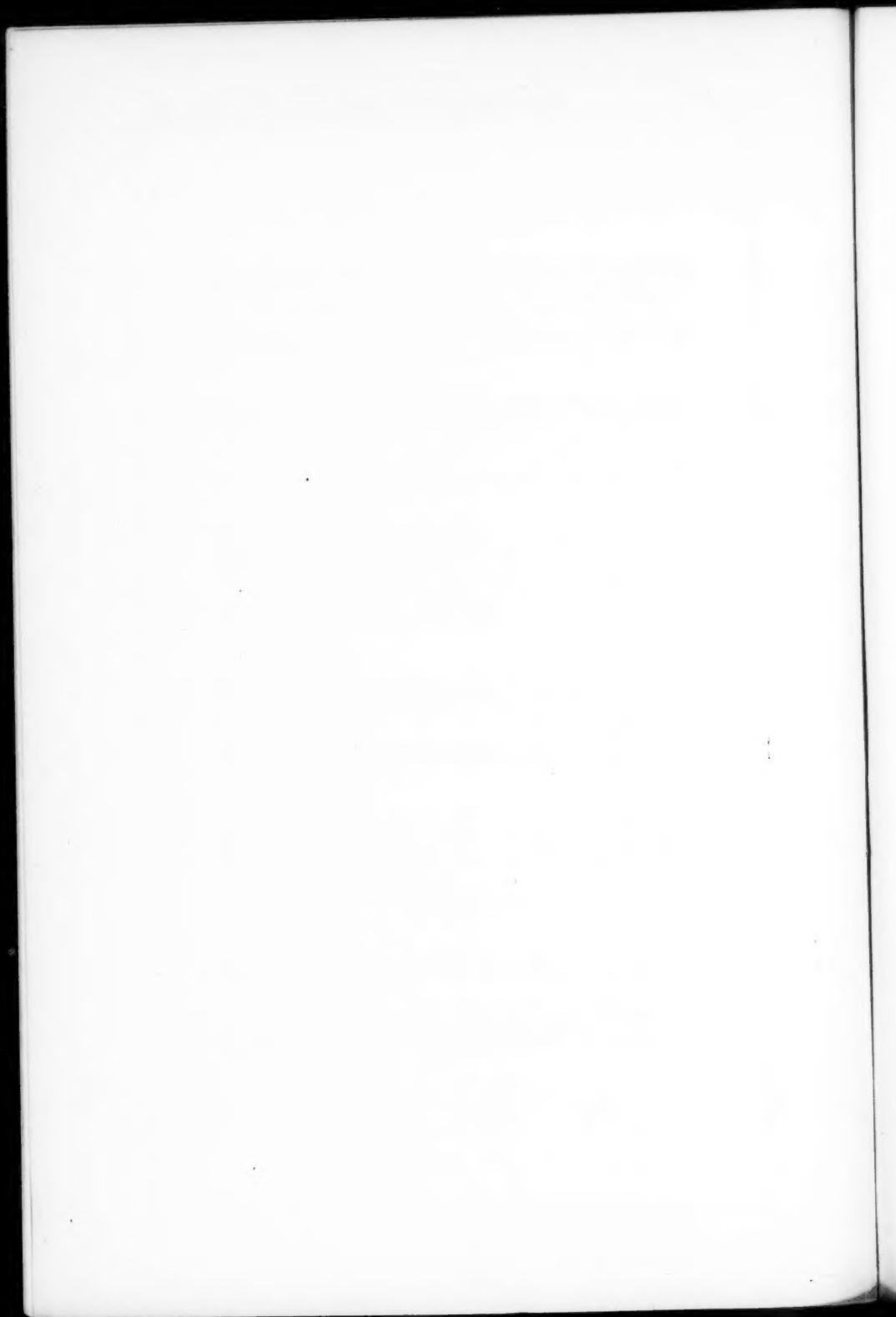


While true lovers eyes Weeping sleep Sleeping weep Weeping



Bo peep. bo peep. bo peep. bo peep peep. bo bo peep.

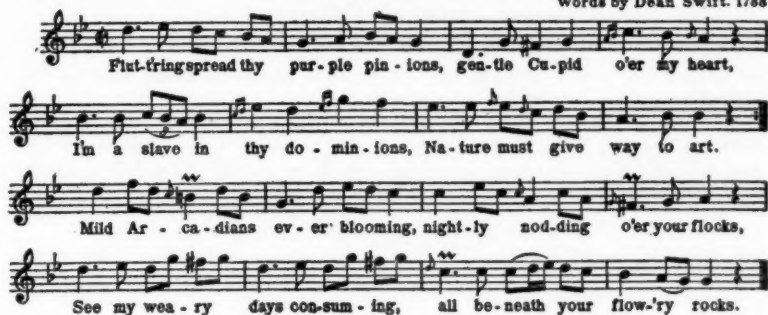






# A Love Song

Words by Dean Swift. 1733



Dr. Beattie admits the legitimate use of imitations in Vocal Music, but he suggests that these must be confined "to the instrumental accompaniment, and by no means attempted by the singer, unless they are expressive and musical, and may be easily managed by the voice." In the song, he adds, "Expression should be predominant, and imitations never used at all, except to assist the expression." He then gives some examples:

In the first part of that excellent song:

"Hide me from day's garish eye,  
While the bee with honey'd thigh,  
At her flowery work does sing,  
And the waters murmuring,  
With such concert as they keep,  
Intice the dewy feather'd sleep."

Handel imitates the murmur of groves and waters by the accompaniment of *tenors*: in another song of the same Oratorio,

"On a plot of rising ground,  
I hear the far-off curfew sound,  
Over some wide-water'd shore,  
Swinging slow with sullen roar."

he makes the bass imitate the evening bell: in another fine song, "Hush, ye pretty warbling choir"—he accompanies the voice with a flageolet that imitates the singing of birds: in the "Sweet bird that shun'st the noise of folly," the chief accompaniment is a German flute imitating occasionally the notes of the nightingale. Sometimes, where expression and imitation happen to coincide, and the latter is easily managed by the voice, he makes the song itself imitative. Thus, in that song

"Let the merry bells ring round,  
And the jocund rebecks sound,  
To many a youth and many a maid,  
Dancing in the chequer'd shade"—

he makes the voice imitate the *sound* of a chime of bells, and in the end the *motion* and gaiety of a dance.

Of these imitations no one will question the propriety. But Handel, notwithstanding his inexhaustible invention, and wonderful talents in the sublime and pathetic, is subject to fits of trifling, and frequently errs in the application of his imitative contrivances. In that song,

"What passion cannot music raise and quell,"

when he comes to the words

"His listening brethren stood around,  
And wondering on their faces fell,"

the accompanying violoncello *falls* suddenly from a quick and *high* movement to a very *deep* and long note. In another song of the same piece (Dryden's *Ode on St. Cecilia's Day*),

"Sharp violins proclaim  
Their jealous pangs and desperation,  
Fury, frantic indignation,  
*Depth* of pains and *height* of passion,  
For the fair, disdainful dame;"—

the words "*Depth* of pains and *height* of passion," are thrice repeated to different keys; and the notes of the first clause are constantly *deep*, and those of the second as regularly *high*.

Dr. Beattie concludes Section I as follows:

Music, therefore, is pleasing, not because it is imitative, but because certain melodies and harmonies have an *aptitude* to raise certain passions, affections, and sentiments in the soul. And, consequently, the pleasures we derive from melody and harmony are seldom or never resolvable into that delight which the human mind receives from the imitation of nature.

In Section II we are given an explanation of the pleasures we derive from music. Dr. Beattie accounts for the pleasure by examining into the *aptitude* which certain melodies and harmonies possess, to raise certain passions, affections, and sentiments. He discusses the difference between a sense of hearing and the possession of a *musical ear*; and he also discusses *concord*s and *discord*s.

A very interesting point is made in regard to musical association of ideas.

Thus, a Scotchman may fancy that there is some sort of likeness between that charming air which he calls "Tweedside" and the scenery of a fine pastoral country: and to the same air, even when only played

on an instrument, he may annex the ideas of romantic love and rural tranquillity; because these form the subject of a pretty little ode which he has often heard sung to that air. But all this is the effect of habit. A foreigner who hears that tune for the first time entertains no such fancy.

It may be remarked that association contributes greatly to heighten the agreeable effect of musical compositions. . . . In childhood every tune is delightful to a musical ear; in our advanced years, an indifferent tune will please, when set off by the amiable qualities of the performer, or by any other agreeable circumstance. During the last war (1761) the "Belleisle March" was long a general favourite. It filled the mind of our people with magnificent ideas of armies, and conquest, and military splendor; for they believed it to be the tune that was played by the French garrison when it marched out with honours of war, and surrendered that fortress to the British troops.

Here let me point out that the "Belleisle March" was composed in 1762, after the receipt of the news of the capture of Belleisle by Augustus Viscount Keppel, and was published in the *Universal Magazine* for 1763. By a regimental order of June 24th, 1768, the band of the Grenadier Guards was ordered to play this March as the official Quick March of the regiment.<sup>1</sup>

The concluding section of Dr. Beattie's Essay is concerned with "Conjectures on some peculiarities of National Music." He points out that there is a certain style of melody peculiar to each country, which the people of that country are apt to prefer to any other style; and he instances Scotland as a striking example, in which the native melody of the Highlands and Western Isles is as different from that of the southern part of the kingdom as the Irish or Erse language is different from the English or Scotch.

The Highlands of Scotland are a picturesque, but in general a melancholy country. Long tracts of mountainous desert, covered with dark heath, are often obscured by misty weather; narrow valleys, rugged soil, dreary climate; the mournful dashing of waves along the friths and lakes that intersect the country. . . . objects like these diffuse a gloom over the fancy, which may be compatible enough with occasional and social merriment, but cannot fail to tincture the thoughts of a nation in the hour of silence and solitude.

Dr. Beattie then proceeds to discuss the Scotch superstition of "Second Sight," and he concludes that from such "a fanciful tribe" one could only expect music of a wild, warlike, irregular type.

<sup>1</sup>The "Belleisle March" has been frequently ascribed to James Oswald, but in one of his own publications, *penes me*, he does not claim it, although he is notorious for his "acquisitive" habits.

On the other hand, it is argued by Dr. Beattie that the physical conformation of the south of Scotland, and its known qualities of pasture lands, "renders the inhabitants favourable to romantic leisure and tender passions." He instances a number of old Scottish songs, which take their names from the rivulets, villages, and hills, adjoining the Tweed near Melrose, as "sweetly and powerfully expressive of love and tenderness and other emotions suited to the tranquillity of pastoral life." These songs include "Cowdenknows," "Galasheils," "Gala Water," "Ettrick Banks," "Braes of Yarrow," "Bush aboon Traquair," etc.

It is a common opinion that these songs were composed by David Rizzio, a musician from Italy, the unfortunate favourite of a very unfortunate Queen. But this must be a mistake. The style of the Scotch music was fixed before his time; for many of the best of these tunes are ascribed by tradition to a more remote period. And it is not to be supposed that he, a foreigner, and in the latter part of his life a man of business, could have acquired or invented a style of musical composition so different in every respect from that to which he had been accustomed in his own country. *Melody* is so much the characteristic of the Scotch tunes, that I doubt whether even basses were set to them before the present (18th) century; whereas, in the days of Rizzio, *Harmony* was the fashionable study of the Italian composers.

Dr. Beattie finishes his essay with a eulogy on Italian music, and he adds that the beautiful language of Italy is a contributory cause to its "unequalled excellence." His view of Rizzio is quite correct; that worthy man, who came to Scotland in 1565, was only five years in the country. The myth of Rizzio as the founder of Scotch music originated with "Orpheus Caledonius," in 1725, and was backed up by James Oswald (1742) and Francis Peacock (1762). Scotch writers aver that the first to expose the myth was Clark in his "Flores Musicae" in 1773, but Dr. Beattie can claim the credit of so doing in the present Essay, which, though not published till 1778, was written in 1762.

## SOME ANOMALIES IN ORCHESTRAL ACCOMPANIMENTS TO CHURCH MUSIC

By ORLANDO A. MANSFIELD

TO the mind of every intelligent auditor of modern orchestral accompaniments the thought is almost certain to have occurred that these musical concomitants must have undergone various stages of development prior to arriving at their present degree of perfection. To pass in review the whole of these successive stages, steps, or strivings, would be impossible within limits approaching the reasonable. Consequently we are compelled to adopt a selective rather than an exhaustive method of examination, giving preference to such experiments or endeavours in the matter of orchestral accompaniments to church music as seem most at variance with present day systems or procedure. Our researches have also to be restricted in regard to time as well as manner, if they are to be described within the limits of a single paper and not those of a series of volumes. Hence, as instrumental music was largely the product of the Renaissance, the Reformation, and the Elizabethan age, we must confine our survey to periods posterior to the 16th century.

This limitation compels us to accept without discussion the statements of historians—inspired or otherwise—relative to the 4000 Levites appointed by David to praise the Lord “with instruments,” and to the 200,000 silver trumpets and 40,000 harps and psalteries instituted by Solomon (Josephus—Ant., bk. viii, ch. 3); although these were, without doubt, anomalous accompaniments to church music. In the early Christian church the music was entirely vocal, instruments being tabooed on account of their pagan associations. Hence the statement that about A. D. 200 a flute was used to accompany the vocal music at a celebration of the Lord’s Supper in an Alexandrian church must be regarded as a record of a most exceptional practice. To the church music of the Middle Ages the accompaniments were not contributed by an orchestra but by those “brethren of concordant spirit”—the *pulsatores organorum*—who, with the blows of their clenched fists upon the mediæval keyboard, hammered their way into musical history and heralded the race of noisy accompanists.

The credit of being "one of the first composers who introduced into his accompaniments to church music instrumental parts in unison with the voices" has been given to Ippolito Baccusi, Maestro di Cappella at Verona Cathedral in 1590. André Campra (1660-1744), sometime director of the music at Notre Dame, but who afterwards forsook the church for the stage, is said to have been the first French composer to attempt to combine orchestral instruments with the organ in choral accompaniments. In his setting of the 126th Psalm, "à grand chœur," there are parts for two oboes and a bassoon, these instruments being employed to duplicate the vocal parts and also to contribute occasional *obbligati* accompaniments. The title-page of the work directs that "*flûtes d'Allemagne*" may be substituted for the oboes. But the first attempt to accompany church music with stringed instruments only appears to have occurred in connection with the psalmody of the English Reformation—its executor being one Richard Allison, "Practitioner in the Art of Musicke," who, in 1599, published a psalter entitled "The Psalms of David in Meter, the plaine songe being the common tunne to be sung and plaide upon the Lute, Orpharyon, Citterne, or Base Violl, severally or altogether." In this work the lute part was written out in the tablature employed for that instrument, and was intended to be used only when the melody of the tune was sung alone. The orpharyon and citterne were instruments of the zither tribe, having metal strings played with a plectrum. The "Base Violl" was synonymous with the Viola da Gamba, the precursor of the modern violoncello. These instruments merely doubled the vocal parts.

The late Dr. E. G. Monk, sometime organist of York Minster, England, asserts that, prior to the so-called "Restoration," anthems, "when performed with any addition to the voices of the choir, were always accompanied by such bow instruments as then represented the infant orchestra. The stringed instrument parts were always in unison with the voices, and had no separate and independent function, except that of filling up the harmony during vocal 'rests,' or occasionally in a few measures of brief symphony." To this information Dr. Rimbault, the great English musical antiquarian, adds that pre-Restoration verse anthems were accompanied with viols, "the organ being only used in the full parts." But, as we shall see presently, there is some slight evidence that wind bands as well as stringed instruments found their way into the church accompaniments of the early Stuart period.



With the dissolute and debauched Charles II the severe style of the Elizabethan school found little favor. The so-called "Merrie Monarch," adding "glitter to corruption," gratified his secular tastes not only by the introduction of a lighter style of music but also by the employment of stringed instruments for the purposes of accompanying and for playing lively *ritornelli* and *intermezzi*. Thus Pepys, in his celebrated Diary, under date of September 14, 1662, writes: "This is the first day of having vialles and other instruments to play a symphony between every verse of the anthems." Then, on Christmas Day of the same year, our garrulous friend says, "The sermon done, a good anthem followed with vialls." Additional evidence on this point, as well as an implication of the use of wood-wind accompaniments to church music prior to this period, is afforded by Evelyn who, in his Diary, under date of December 21, 1663, says, "Instead of the ancient, grave, and solemn wind music accompanying the organ, there was introduced a concert of twenty-four violins between every pause, after the French fantastical light way, better suiting a tavern or playhouse than a church." These "twenty-four violins" constituted Charles's attempt at an imitation of the "vingt-quatre violons" of the days of Louis XIII and "le Grand Monarque," with whose strains, as played at all court dances and dinners, the English King had become familiar in the days of his exile, and whose existence suggested the

"Four and twenty fiddlers,  
All in a row"

of the well-known nursery rhyme. In fine, as Mr. Myles B. Foster writes, "In place of simple vocal counterpoint, of which the accompaniment, a scarcely necessary adjunct, was but the facsimile, there were gradually introduced the Verse and Solo anthems, with their independent symphonies and ritornellos, often graced (as the King fancied) or more possibly disgraced, with twiddles and turns enough to upset the reverence of the music, and mar the serious character of the words."

In his Chandos Anthems, written during 1718 to 1720, for services at the chapel of the Duke of Chandos, near London, Handel employed the organ and strings, with one oboe, one bassoon, and sometimes two flutes, his Chandos Te Deum having a trumpet part. His stringed orchestra probably suffered from local limitations, as it had no violins; but his treatment of the remaining instruments was often highly original. Thus, in "As

pants the hart," the tenor part is assigned to the 'cellos, the bassoon reinforcing the double-basses in the eight-foot octave as in modern scores. A solo, "Tears are my daily food," from the same work, is accompanied by oboe, bassoon, and organ; while in a duet from the anthem "My song shall be alway," a three-part harmony is formed by violins in unison for the upper part, 'cellos and bassoon in unison for the middle part, and the double-bass (with the organ supplying the eight-foot pitch) for the lowest part. Another solo from "Let God arise" is similarly treated but with the addition of an oboe solo making four-part harmony.

The scores of Bach's Cantatas afford numerous examples of the employment of obsolete stringed instruments as well as wind and brass. Amongst the strings are the violino piccolo, a small violin tuned a minor 3rd higher than the modern instrument, the viola d'amore, a variety of tenor with "sympathetic strings" of fine brass or steel wire in addition to the ordinary gut strings; the six-stringed Viola da Gamba, already mentioned; and, besides the lute, the violoncello piccolo, an instrument of the same shape and pitch as the modern 'cello but of smaller size and thinner stringing. The obbligato to the solo, "Mein gläubiges Herz," was marked for the violoncello piccolo; and, though now played by the modern 'cello, was probably intended for the Viola da Gamba.

In regard to the treatment and combination of stringed instruments Bach's Cantatas present some unusually interesting features. Thus, in the Easter Cantata, "Der Himmel lacht," we have parts for 2 violins, 2 violas, 2 'cellos, double-bass and organ, combined with 3 oboes, a tenor oboe (called "taille"), a bassoon, 3 trumpets, and drums. Again, in "Gleich wie der Regen," we have no violins but, instead, 4 violas—the first and second parts of which are doubled by 2 flutes in the octave above—a bassoon, organ, and basses. Lastly, in "Gottes Zeit," we find 2 flutes and 2 Viole da Gamba, with basses and organ, imparting, as Spitta says, "a muffled and dreamy effect," the Cantata being an *in memoriam* work for some one now unknown.

The only example we have of the employment of a monochord as an accompaniment to church music is afforded us in the case of that ancient instrument the tromba marina, or marine trumpet, so called "on account of its external resemblance to the large speaking trumpet used on board Italian vessels." The instrument has a head like that of a violin, with a neck joined to a long resonant box, the whole being about six feet in length. Its one string, generally tuned to CC, rests on a bridge, one end of which

is rigid, the other being free and visibly vibrating something like an organ reed. The string is bowed with a heavy 'cello bow; but, instead of being stopped, is played in harmonics produced by touching the string lightly with the thumb of the left hand at certain places indicated on the finger-board. The tone thus produced is powerful, but harsh and nasal; while that produced by ordinary stopping has been described as "less melodious than the bray of an ass." It was, however, sufficiently popular to receive notice in Molière's "*Bourgeois Gentilhomme*" (1670), to be described in detail in Mersennus's "*Harmonie Universelle*" (1636), and to be mentioned by Leopold Mozart in his *Violin School* (1756). It is now entirely obsolete; but in church music it was at one time extensively used to accompany the plain song in some of the German nunneries, probably on account of its supposed German origin. On festival occasions it is said that the nuns have been known to "jubilate" on three or four of these instruments with drums in addition!

Amongst the wood-wind instruments which have contributed to the anomalous in church music accompaniments, a prominent position should be assigned to the cornet, cornetto, or zinke, an instrument not to be confused with the modern cornet, but a kind of flute with a tone larger and coarser than that of the oboe. The instrument consisted of a straight or curved wooden tube covered with leather, pierced with holes for the fingers, and blown through a cupped mouthpiece similar to that of the trumpet. Its compass was a complete chromatic scale of over two octaves, from fiddle or gamut G upwards, but the difficulty experienced in playing the instrument was the chief factor in the decline of its popularity. Concerning its tone, which appears to have blended well with the brass, Artusi, an able Italian musician, writing in 1600, compared it to "the brightness of a sunbeam piercing the darkness, when one hears it among the voices in cathedrals, churches, or chapels"; while Mersennus, as quoted by Sir John Hawkins, declares that the sounds of the cornet are vehement, but that those who are skilful are able so to soften and modulate them that nothing can be more sweet. A larger and coarser toned cornet was often played in Germany from watch-towers as a fire-alarm or war signal. Hence the satirical appellation, "*Stadtkalb*" or "Town calf."

In church music, however, the cornet was generally used to strengthen the treble part. Thus Hawkins, speaking of the condition of cathedral services after the "Restoration," says that "to such streights were they driven, that for a twelvemonth. . .

the clergy were forced to supply the want of boys by cornets, and men who had feigned voices." But this use of the cornet in the church was not a novelty, as Stow, in his "Annals," speaks of "sundry anthems sung with organ, cornets, sackbuts, and other excellent instruments of music" at the Chapel Royal in the Jacobean age; while Brookbank, in his pamphlet "The well tuned organ" (1660), relates that Charles I, when at Oxford, "had service at the cathedral with organs, sackbuts, recorders, cornets, etc." This quotation confirms the implication of Evelyn in regard to the employment of other than stringed accompaniments to church music in pre-Restoration times. In passing we may observe that the recorder was a variety of the flute-à-bec with a compass of two octaves from middle F upwards, and the sackbut the old English name for the trombone or double trumpet. Randolph or Randall Jewett, Jewitt, or Jewit (1603-1675), in whose days orthography was by no means an exact science but more or less of a lost art, was organist of Christ Church and St. Patrick's Cathedral, Dublin, from 1631 to 1639. Incidentally we note that he was afterwards organist of Chester Cathedral, and, finally, of Winchester, where he died and was succeeded by John Reading, the alleged composer of "Adeste Fideles" and the actual author of "Dulce Domum." Jewett had introduced orchestral accompaniments into the services of the Irish Church prior to the Commonwealth, since the "rather puritanically inclined Bishop Bedell" describes a service at Christ Church as being "attended and celebrated with all manner of instrumental musick, as organs, sackbutts, cornetts, violls, etc., as if it had been at the dedication of Nebuchadnezzar's golden image in the plain of Dura." That Jewitt really employed wind instruments in his pre-Restoration performances is proved by the fact that in 1637 the cathedral authorities issued an act or ordinance directing the proctor to pay "to the two sackbutts and two cornetts for their service and attendance in the Cathedrall the sume of twenty nobles eache at or before Easter next ensuing."

In the continuation of the passage from Evelyn, from and to which quotations and allusions have been and will be made, the diarist complains that "now we no more hear the cornet which gave life to the organ; that instrument quite left off in which the English were so skilful." This, written in 1663, was the first mention of the decline of cornet playing. It was followed in the next century by statements far more explicit. In Germany the instrument had been used with the brass to play chorals from the church towers; but Mattheson, in 1739, regrets that

"the fine Zinken and trombones which formerly were considered to be of one family. . . are now seemingly banished from our churches, especially the Zinke which, in spite of its harshness, is so penetrating." Schubart, an erratic German composer and writer, who died in 1797, says of that time that "a good player on the Zinke can now only be found in Germany, and even there . . . but very few are left."

In some of his church cantatas Bach uses the cornet to strengthen the melody or to play in combination with the trombones in chorals. Professor Prout states that the only independent parts written for the instrument are in the cantatas "Es ist nichts gesundes" and "O Jesu Christ, mein Leben's Licht." In the former work a choral is announced by flutes, cornets, and three trombones; while in the latter work we have Bach's only attempt at accompanying a whole work by wind instruments. These, in addition to cornets, are three trombones and two *Litui*, presumably a type of natural horns or trumpets (Latin *lituus*, a long trumpet curved at the end). Spitta thinks that this cantata, dating about 1737, was "probably performed in the open air at a funeral ceremony."

Concerning an anthem, or hymn, written for a festival service of the Knights of the Garter, at Windsor, England, shortly after the "Restoration," by Captain Cooke, the choirmaster of the Chapel Royal, Anthony Wood says that it was accompanied by "two double sackbuts and two double courtals placed at convenient distances amongst the classes of the gentlemen of both choirs, to the end that all might distinctly hear, and consequently keep together both in time and tune." This courtal was an obsolete type of bassoon, called in French *courtant* on account of its shortness. Phillips, as quoted by Hawkins, gives it as curtail, "a bass to the hautboy."

The natural bass to the cornet was provided by a wind instrument generally made of nut wood covered with leather, and called the serpent on account of its shape which has been described as three "U-shaped turns followed by a circular convolution," the whole being about 8 feet in length. It dates from about 1600; and, played through a cup-shaped mouthpiece, was pierced with six holes and furnished with several keys. Its compass was about  $2\frac{1}{2}$  octaves, from BBB; its chief defect being its uncertainty and inequality of production. Concerning its tone opinions vary. Mersennus declared that it was "strong enough to drown twenty robust voices," and yet capable of being "attempered to the softness of the sweetest voice." Berlioz, however, described its

tone as "essentially barbarous"; but Lichenthal (1826), in his *Dizionario della Musica*, speaks highly of the instrument; while a modern English writer describes its tone as being less blatant than the brass and more "tender and veiled" than the tone of the ophicleide or "chromatic bullock," by whose "bellowing tones" it was at first superseded. With this latter opinion the writer of this article (who has both seen, heard, handled, and blown the instrument) most cordially agrees.

In the French churches the serpent was formerly used to support the voices of the officiating clergy in their intonings of the plain song, the "serpent d'église" being a recognized (and, let us hope, a duly salaried) functionary. Thus Mendelssohn, writing from Paris, in 1832, says, "I have just come from St. Sulpice. . . . The effect of the *canto fermo* accompanied by a serpent, those who have not heard it could scarcely conceive." In the rustic churches of our grandparents the serpent played an important part. It often formed the only bass of the country orchestra, and any attempt on the part of meddlesome church officials to oust it from its place in church or *al fresco* performances frequently resulted in a serious ecclesiastical division or secession.

Wagner has introduced the serpent into his "Liebesmahl der Apostel," and Mendelssohn's employment of the instrument in St. Paul, and of its superseder, the ophicleide, in "Elijah," are facts familiar to all orchestral students. As a proof of the complete desuetude of the instrument we may mention that when some few years ago Professor Prout was arranging for a performance of "St. Paul" in London, England, he could not find a single serpentist amongst the numberless orchestral players of that huge city. Perhaps the name of the instrument had something to do with its decline. To call a man a serpentist is not pretty; to allude to him as a serpent is a very doubtful and double-edged compliment; while to describe him as "that old serpent" is highly calculated to set in motion the machinery of legal action.

Bach does not appear to have used the serpent; but he has atoned for this neglect by the introduction into his scores of the flute-à-bec, the precursor of the modern flute; the oboe d'amore, a 3rd lower in pitch than the modern oboe; and the oboe di caccia, a kind of bassoon, a 4th higher than the modern instrument. In the Pastoral Symphony from his Christmas Oratorio, Bach employs *inter alia*, two oboi d'amore and two oboi di caccia. His employment of the "taille" or tenor oboe has already been noticed.

Peculiarities in the accompaniment of church music by brass instruments are not so numerous as in the case of the strings or



even of the wood-wind. Bach, however, in the initial and final choruses of his cantata "Schauet doch und sehet," writes Tromba and Corno "da tirarsi," the latter instrument being used again in the cantata "Halt im Gedächtniss Jesum Christ." These horns and trumpets were undoubtedly furnished with slides, thus producing a complete chromatic scale. The treatment of the trumpet by both Bach and Handel is so familiar as to require no detailed description here. As a typical case from Handel we may point to the Dettingen Te Deum in which are employed three trumpets, one of which was termed "principale" and resembled in tone and treatment the modern trumpet, while the remaining two were termed "Clarini I and II" and appear to have been smaller in size and tone and to have had assigned to them florid passages in the upper registers. Haydn employs three trumpets in his Imperial Mass; while Henry Purcell "the introducer of a new and more effective employment of the orchestra in accompaniment" has scored his Te Deum and Jubilate in D (probably the first English Service to be furnished with orchestral accompaniments) for four trumpets and strings. To Bach's employment of the "Litui" attention has already been directed.

As might be expected from its antiquity, its sonority, and its possible purity of intonation, the trombone, or sackbut, has often been the recipient of anomalous treatment in accompaniments to church music. Earlier than the instances of its combination with the zinken, to which allusion has already been made, comes the example of the celebrated Giovanni Gabrieli (1557-1613), sometime organist of St. Mark's, Venice, who, in his motet for two choirs, "In excelsis benedicite Domine," employed one violin, two trombones, and three cornets (Zinken); while his "Surrexit Christus" was scored for three voices, two violin parts, two cornets and four trombones. Ludovico Viadana (circa 1560-1640) is credited with having accompanied his tenor solo, "Bone Jesu," with nothing more or less than a couple of trombones which we can only hope were skilfully played. Monteverdi, in 1631, introduced trombones into some movements of a mass he wrote for St. Mark's, Venice, to commemorate the cessation of the plague. The reinforcement of the choral or *canto fermo* by the trumpet or trombone was a common procedure with Bach; and to-day the German choral is often given out, or strengthened, by a trio or quartet of trombones, or even played by a "Posaunenchor" from a church tower on the mornings of great festivals. The English Birmingham Festival of 1823 was

remarkable for "the introduction of *nine* trombones in addition to the organ at the church service."

At the funeral of that great English statesman, the Right Honourable William Ewart Gladstone, in Westminster Abbey, May 28, 1898, there were performed (we believe for the first time in England) Beethoven's three *Equali* for four trombones, the trombones and drums uniting with the organ at various points during the service. The four trombone players—two altos, a tenor and a bass—were stationed in the chantry of Henry V, above the high altar. Says a writer who was present, "The hushed stillness which pervaded the noble fane was broken with indescribable tenderness as the sustained chord of D minor fell upon the ears of the great congregation in tones of weird simplicity and exquisite pathos." At the memorial service for King Edward VII, held in the same building, on May 20, 1910, the *Equali* were again played, and on both occasions musicians agreed that there was nothing more impressive. The *Equali* were written in the autumn of 1812, at the request of the choirmaster of Linz cathedral for something for trombones to be performed on All Souls' Day. They were rendered with words added by Seyfried, at Beethoven's funeral; and, in this form, were published by Haslinger, in 1827. It was not until 1888 that they were issued by Breitkopf and Haertel in their original form. Their use at Mr. Gladstone's funeral was due to the action of Mr. George Case, the alto of the London Trombone Quartet, by whom they were played on that occasion. Their employment at state funeral ceremonies seems now to be fairly well established.

That noted English musical scientist, the late Dr. Stone, relates that being "requested to lead the singing in the open air at the laying of the foundation stone of a church" he used a quartet consisting of a slide trumpet, alto and tenor trombones, with euphonium and contrafagotto in octaves for the positive bass." He declares that "with good playing" the result was "striking and, perhaps, deserving of imitation." The use of the modern cornet to merely reinforce the melody of hymn tunes is a vulgar expedient only mentioned here to be condemned. In many English churches there is a tendency to employ modern cornets, saxhorns, euphoniums, and other valve instruments, not in preference to trumpets, horns, and trombones, but because the former classes of instruments are more readily obtainable. Yet even amongst the available orchestral material it is perhaps to be regretted that more serious efforts are not made to introduce more variety into orchestral accompaniments to church music.

Some of these attempts would probably end in failure, but there is a greater probability that in the making of an effort to avoid monotony we might produce some combination likely to be permanently useful. It was this striving after variety that first produced the orchestral combinations now regarded as classical. As Herrick says, or sings:

"Thus times do shift; each thing his turne does hold;  
New things succeed, as former things grow old."

## ROSALIE LEVASSEUR, AMBASSADRESS OF OPERA.

By J. G. PROD' HOMME

THE history of the arts, and particularly of the art of music, presents in ancient as in modern times—for a Lulli as well as for a Wagner—the confirmation of the postulate often verified in biology and sociology, that the function or the need creates the organ. When a truly creative artist arises, clashing with the customs or the routine of an epoch or a nation, the imperious force of his genius invariably develops—after some hesitations and unsuccessful trials—interpreters capable of serving as the mirror of his inspirations. Thus the will of a Lulli, sometimes brutal, produces a company of singers perfectly adapted to his new art; thus Rameau compelled to serve his, artists like the tenor Jélyotte or the “celestial” Marie Fel. In like manner, during the reign of Louis XVI, the Chevalier Gluck, whose genius is akin to that of our French classics, seeking, above all, dramatic truth, as does our entire musical school, found it necessary to train among the performers of the Paris Opéra collaborators in the “style” of his immortal scores.

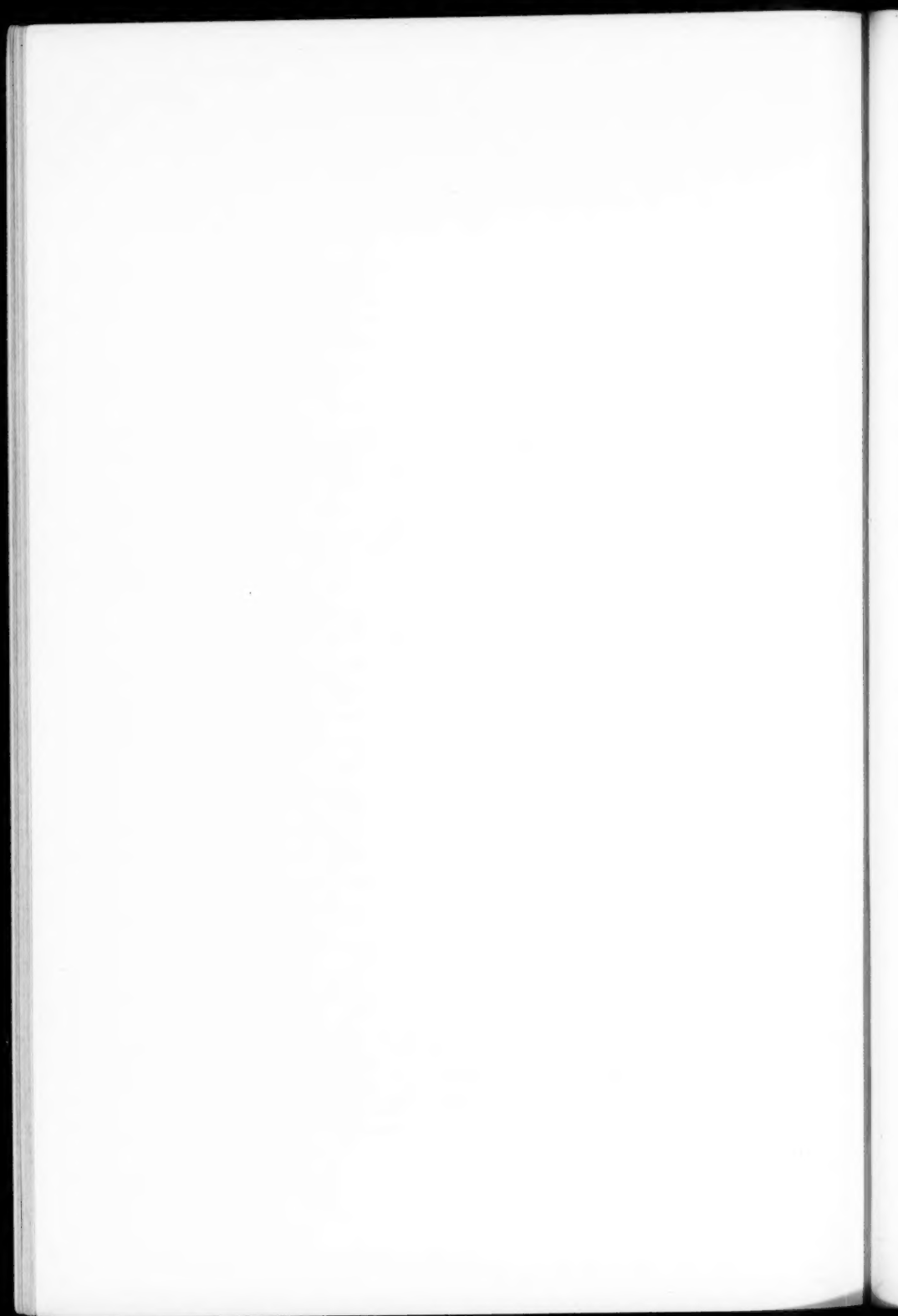
The “German Orpheus,” as his contemporaries called him, found at the Royal Academy of Music a personnel of soloists, chorus singers and orchestra players accustomed to the execution of a repertory as alien as possible to his severe ideal, and who could not but oppose to his innovations the force of inertia or of unintelligence. It was necessary first to shake these artists out of their apathy and routine, and this task he set himself to perform from the time of his first sojourn in Paris. Success was not immediate, and the coldness of the first audiences of *Iphigénie en Aulide* can without doubt be ascribed as much to the inadequacy of his interpreters, although among them were numbered a Sophie Arnould and a Larrivée, undeniable “glories” of the Opéra, as to the novelty of his style.

With *Orphée*, sung by the tenor Legros (August 2, 1774), there was already marked progress, but not until the rôle of *Iphigénie* was taken by Rosalie Levasseur did Gluck feel that he had found in Paris a perfect interpreter of his dramatic thought. With this singer, until then little known at the Opéra except for



Rosalie Levasseur

By courtesy from the Collection Blondel, Paris



her extra-theatrical adventures, one may say that the Gluckist style was born, and when later an artist like Saint-Huberty impersonated his characters she could only add to the tradition established by her predecessor her own dramatic and musical intelligence.

Rosalie Levasseur in her comparatively short career enjoyed the rarest good fortune that could enter into the dreams of a dramatic singer, in having her name connected with indisputable and universally admired masterpieces. And we believe that the story of her long life, freed from the legend grafted upon it, deserves to be attempted, as a chapter, for the most part unpublished, of the history of the Royal Academy of Music and at the same time as an episode in the diplomatic history of Europe on the eve of the French Revolution.<sup>1</sup>

Rosalie Le Vasseur, or Levasseur, whose forenames were really Marie Rose Josèphe, was born out of wedlock at Valenciennes; her parents were Jean Baptiste Levasseur, a painter twenty years of age, and Marie Catherine Tournay, a young girl of seventeen. Baptized the 8th of October, 1749, she was legitimized later by the marriage of her parents, which took place at Paris, in the church of Saint Eustache, February 2d, 1761.

It is probable that Levasseur and his companion had been living in Paris for some time when they decided to regularize a situation which had existed for more than twelve years. Was their young daughter then "discovered" by some teacher of singing at the Royal Academy of Music, like so many other celebrated singers of the Opéra, and put at that "Ecole du Magasin" in the rue Saint-Nicolas which served as the Conservatory of the time, or did she learn music by singing in some *maîtrise*, as her father may have done (for he also was qualified as a church singer)? We do not know; but the first hypothesis is the more plausible. The fact remains that the *Mercure de France* of September, 1766 (p. 188) announced to its readers in extremely eulogistic terms that at one of those performances of "fragments" so much enjoyed in the 18th century:

<sup>1</sup>The principal sources for this article are the *Mémoires secrets* of Bachaumont and Métra's *Correspondance secrète*; other contemporary writings will be cited in footnotes, as also the documents preserved in the National archives (Série o<sup>1</sup> Maison du Roi; F 5643, série T, séquestre of the Revolutionary period) and in the Archives of the Seine (Domaines, carton 1441, dossier 2860); the biography of Mercy-Argenteau by the Marquis de Pimodan (Paris, 1913); and above all, M. Welvert's study *Mercy-Argenteau a-t-il épousé Rosalie Levasseur?* (in the Historical archives of Charavay, 1st series, 1889-1890), which has definitely destroyed the legend of the diplomat's marriage with the pensioner of the Royal Academy of Music.



Mlle. Rosalie, a young singer in the chorus, made her début in the same act [of the *Europe Galante* of Campra] in the rôle of Zaïde. Her innocent confidence gave her courage from the start to exhibit a pretty voice and sufficiently good method, and also to use her arms not ungracefully and at times quite appropriately. She sings with assurance, and unites with intelligence some indications of sentiment. She received great applause, which increased with each performance in which she appeared; this seems not unnatural when one learns that the young actress combines with evidences of talent an agreeable face and a charming figure, graceful and excellently suited to the stage.

This first notice, so favorable and even flattering, shows that from her début the young choriste displayed genuine aptness for the lyric stage as known to her contemporaries; and that the habitués of the Theatre gave a favorable reception to the singer who was destined later to incarnate the heroines of Gluck.

De beaux yeux noirs, une taille, une mine,  
Fière et friponne, imposante et mutine,

(Beautiful black eyes, a figure, a mien  
Both proud and roguish, imposing and saucy)

thus Marmontel depicts her in his poem *Polymnie*. And, apropos of a dispute she had had with Mlle. Dervieux, one of her associates at the Opéra, Bachaumont cites these verses which describe her morally:

Le crime excite tous ses sens,  
L'appât de l'or fait ses penchants,  
Son nom manque à ces traits touchants,  
Eh bien! c'est Rosalie.

(Vice arouses her senses,  
The lure of gold decides her bent.  
The name for this touching picture?  
Ah yes! 'tis Rosalie.)

More prosaically, a passport (now in the National archives) issued twenty years later, as it dates from the Revolutionary epoch, describes Levasseur as a person "five feet high, hair and eyebrows brown, eyes blue, an irregular nose, ordinary mouth, round chin, high forehead, oval face."

The *Mercur de France*, to which the historian of the Opéra in the 18th century must always have recourse, does not again mention Rosalie, after her first appearance, until the following year. Another débutante, Mlle. Beaumesnil—destined to be eclipsed ten years later by Levasseur, although possessing a talent both finer and more genuine—"being ill with a cold," one

reads in the number for January, 1767, "her place was taken after the fifth representation [of *Sylvie*] by Mlle. Rosalie, a young singer whom we have had frequent occasion [*sic!* This was the second!] to mention favorably, and who responded most satisfactorily to the hopes entertained of her by the public."<sup>1</sup>

About this same time Rosalie sang again as "the beloved Sultanness in the Turkish act" of a new series of "fragments" produced December 18, 1766. Later she took acceptably the rôle of *Sylvie*, following Beaumesnil, in the last performances of Berton's opera of this name. She had twice played the rôle of *Cupid* in the same piece, a part in which she appeared to great advantage; indeed, it was soon assigned to her regularly, instead of to Mlle. Larrivée, who was occupied in studying the character of Eglé in Lulli's *Thésée*. "The charming figure of Mlle. Rosalie in the guise of Cupid," says the *Mercure* on this occasion, "makes of fiction a reality, so to speak; the grace of her acting, and the intelligence and good taste of her singing, add still more to the agreeable illusion."

In June the new directors of the Royal Academy of Music, Berton and Trial, gave her the part of an old woman in Mondonville's *Carnaval du Parnasse*—a part certainly little suited to a young actress so perfect in the rôle of Cupid that she was to play it again in *Orphée* on the very eve of interpreting *Iphigénie*; but soon after she was chosen to alternate with her fellow-singer Beaumesnil in the rôle of Licoris in the prologue to the same piece; then, in the *Fire act* from the *Eléments* of Roy and Des-touches, in an entertainment composed of "fragments," she again filled the "little rôle of Cupid" (August 18th). Toward the end of this year she sang, in place of Mlle. Larrivée, the part of Coronis and that of Pomone, in the latter acting as substitute for the celebrated Sophie Arnould. "One owes her as well as M. Durand," says the *Mercure*, "the justice of saying that they merited the applause which they received in their different rôles." And again, in Poinsinet's *Théonis*, with music by Berton and Trial, "the light yet sonorous voice of Mlle. Rosalie" was applauded in the rôle of Cupid, a part in which she decidedly excelled wherever it occurred, and few were the librettos from which the little god was banished.

It was not long before Cupid and his impersonator made a new appearance in the *Titon et l'Aurore* of Mondonville (January

<sup>1</sup>Unless otherwise stated the following data as to Rosalie's operatic career have been culled from the contemporary numbers of the *Mercure de France*. The exact references will be published in the French version of my essay.

12, 1768), and also in *Sylvie*, which was performed in March. In Rameau's *Dardanus*, produced about the same time, Rosalie, according to her chronicler "sang with her touching voice and ingenuous air which always gain for her the good-will of the public."

But a more important appearance was to distinguish her for the musical public, when the *Carnaval du Parnasse* was revived (April 14th). She sang twice in the principal rôle "with the greatest success; and the public seemed to be genuinely interested in the progress of this young actress, whose aptitude and talents awaken the highest hopes."

When, in the month of September, the Opéra revived *Daphnis et Alcimadure*—the Languedocian opera whose "creation" Mondonville, the author and composer, had entrusted to Marie Fel and Jélyotte—Rosalie took the part of Alcimadure "with much intelligence; she rendered several airs with finesse and good taste," asserts the collaborator of the *Mercure*, "her voice, fresh and sonorous, evoked well-deserved applause." On the occasion of this revival Bachaumont wrote, the 9th of August, 1768,

Mlle. Rosalie took the place of Madame Larrivée in the part of Alcimadure. This actress, who has but a thread of her voice, acts infinitely better than the prima donna. She is full of sentiment and intelligence. She would be fitted to attain the highest success if her vocal ability corresponded to her other talents.

For almost a year the *Mercure* does not again print the name of Rosalie, but in July, 1769, in an account of a performance of the one-act *Vertumne et Pomone* (May 20th) it vaunts the intelligence and charm with which she played the rôle of Pomone. About the same time "by her naïve and animated acting she made prominent the part of Colin" in *Les Amours de Ragonde*, a comedy-ballet in three acts by Mouret.

A little later, having replaced Mlle. Beaumesnil in the *Zaïs* of Rameau,

she rendered with intelligence and sentiment the rôle of Zélide. She infused much expression into her singing and spirit into her acting. This amiable actress, who was much applauded in the comic rôle of Colin in *Les Amours de Ragonde* (continues the *Mercure*) develops steadily the resources of a talent which lends itself to the various *genres* of the stage.

The year did not pass without the reappearance of the young actress in the guise of Love. The opportunity was offered her in a new series of "fragments," in which Sophie Arnould seems to

have achieved a veritable triumph. The spectacle consisted of Mouret's *La Provençale*, followed by *Erigone* and *Psyche*, two ballets from Mondonville's *Fêtes de Paphos* (1758).

The first, in which M. Durand and Mlle. Rosalie filled the rôles of Bacchus and *Erigone*, was well received. But even the rapturous applause of the audience expressed imperfectly the enthusiasm awakened by Mlle. Arnoult as *Psyche*. What noble sorrow, what captivating charm, what touching grace, are displayed in her inimitable acting. Each spectator shares the agitation which she inspires in Cupid. Mlle. Rosalie who so justly appears in the latter rôle plays it with a bewitching grace which assures a triumph both to the god and to the charming actress who represents him.

Soon, however, this ballet, which was given toward the end of the year, changed interpreters, and *Psyche* was played by Mlle. Beaumesnil, while Mlle. Châteauneuf, still almost a débutante, appeared as Cupid.

When, on the 26th of January, 1770, the new hall of the Opéra in the Palais Royal was opened (the earlier one having burned down in 1763) with a revival of Rameau's *Zoroastre*, Mlles. Larrivée, Beaumesnil and Rosalie took in succession the part of the Princess Amélite, "to the satisfaction of the public" says the *Mercure* simply, more concerned to describe the new hall and its decorations than to criticize the works, already known, which were presented there. After *Zoroastre*, pursues the chronicler,

there was performed on Thursdays and sometimes on other days, the heroic ballet *Zaïs*, with words and music by the same authors as *Zoroastre*. Mlles. Beaumesnil and Rosalie sang alternately in the rôle of *Zaïs*, with the success that results from talent stimulated by emulation.

Then followed *Zaïde*, a heroic ballet by La Marre, with music by Royer, in which Rosalie, as Isabelle, had "no less success" than Duplant, one of her most redoubtable rivals. Her voice seemed "to acquire more strength from day to day," and the young singer, putting "much intelligence and expression into her acting, added constantly to the hopes aroused by her talent."

A series of "fragments" by Rameau (prologue to the *Indes galantes*, *Hilas et Zélie* and the one-act *Danse des Talents lyriques*) succeeding *Zaïde*, July 6th,

Mlle. Rosalie was greatly applauded as Hebe [in the *Indes galantes*] a part of which she expressed the gaiety as happily as she depicted the sentiment. This young actress has a flexible voice which she manages

with taste, and which lends itself to all *genres*. Her success and her progress prove her zeal to merit the approbation of the public.

In *Zélis* she received "well-deserved applause," and in the one-act piece *La Danse*, appearing as a shepherdess, she sang "the airs of the *divertissement* very agreeably."

The same rather vague eulogies relating to her "zeal," apropos of the prologue to the *Indes galantes* and of the performance of an act of the *Fêtes grecques et romaines* by Colin de Blamont.

Toward the end of the year (December 11, 1770) the revival of *Ismène et Isménias* brought Rosalie the rôle of Indifférence in the second act, and that of Cupid in the third; she excelled, as we know, in the latter part, and took it again in *Pyrame et Thisbé* (February 5th), when she "was greatly applauded."

The performance of the first act of Bury's *Hylas et Zélie*, at the Easter reopening of 1771, gave her the opportunity of assuming "one of the principal rôles," and (on August 13th) in a new pastoral, *La Cinquantaine*, with music by La Borde, first "valet de chambre" of the King, she had a chance to win applause in the *genre tempéré* which she had attempted so successfully in *Les Amours de Ragonde*, and which, moreover, must have suited her decidedly better at that period than the *genre héroïque*.

"The part of Colin, a youth, played at the first performance for special reasons by Mlle. Lafond, one of the dancers, was taken by Mlle. Rosalie, who pleased as much by her acting as by the good taste with which she sang," says the *Mercure*.

Later she interpreted the principal rôle of Dauvergne's *Sibille* and the part of Corisande in Lulli's *Amadis* (November 26th).

The Opéra, which was living, so to speak, from day to day by revivals of the works of Lulli and Rameau, or the agreeable trifles of their successors, seemed to be awaiting the coming of a Messiah who should announce a new word in the lyric art. The annals of the Royal Academy of Music before the arrival of Gluck early in the year 1774, offer nothing in fact but *remises* or unimportant *premières*.

This same *Amadis* of Lulli, staged again in November, offered Rosalie a part more important than Corisande—that of Oriane, in which, alternating with her rival Mlle. Beaumesnil, she substituted for the incomparable Sophie Arnould; both received "excellently deserved applause."

In a series of "fragments" (the one-act *Incas*, *Alphée et Aréthuse* and Trial's *Fête de Flore*) "Mlle. Rosalie, who had never

been seen before as Aréthuse, was found charming in this rôle as in all those she undertakes." Upon the revival of *Castor et Pollux* (January 21, 1772), two rôles, still secondary ones however, were assigned her: those of a follower of Hebe and a Happy Shadow. Rameau's opera achieved a great success and performances continued to be given at frequent intervals. "Mlle. Rosalie," we presently learn, "and Mlle. Beaumesnil share the plaudits of the audience, for the little airs which they sing alternately."

At the performance which the Opéra was accustomed to give "for the actors" before the Easter closing and again at the reopening, she figures in Rousseau's *Devin du Village* together with Le Gros and Gélén. The new management (which included Rebel and Dauvergne) produced for the first time *Aline, reine de Golconde* by Monsigny. "The rôle of Zélie, friend and confidante of the Queen, could not be better filled than by Mlle. Rosalie," declares the *Mercure*. After the *première* of Lagarde's *Æglé*, in which she represented Fortune (still in turn with Beaumesnil) she won as usual "well merited approbation for her beautiful voice, her expressive singing and her clever acting." At the last performance of this ephemeral work (August 23d), whose composer was "music master to the Royal children" and whose librettist, Laujon, was "secrétaire des commandements" of His Royal Highness, Monseigneur the Duc de Bourbon,

Mlle. Rosalie played with much intelligence and sang with taste and sentiment the part of *Æglé*; she won the commendation of the audience, enchanted by her ardor and her rare gifts, which apparently increase from day to day.

After this somewhat banal praise and following a revival of *La Cinquantaine*—in which she again played Colin—comes this appreciation of her talent, better adapted, as we have said, to the *genre moyen* than to the *genre héroïque*: "Mlle. Rosalie pleases and will undoubtedly continue to please in all the rôles entrusted to her." The Colin of *La Borde* is followed by the Colette of Rousseau (October 27th). In this innocent pastoral, part of the *Devin du Village*, which was produced with success until as late as 1823, "Mlle. Rosalie sang and played with much grace. . . She was heartily applauded," declares the chronicler of the Opéra.

Meanwhile the *Mercure*, largely read by a dilettante public, had just printed for the first time, in its October number, a name new to the French—that of a German called Glouch (*sic*) whom the Bailli du Roulet, an attaché of the French embassy in Vienna and librettist of an *Iphigénie* never published, presented to the



public in a letter addressed to Dauvergne. This was the prelude to the great musical quarrel which for an entire decade was to divide court and town between Gluck and Piccinni, between the German and the Italian schools, come to the challenge in France.

While awaiting the two-fold revelation of *Iphigénie* and *Orphée*, the future creator of *Alceste* and *Armide* alternates with the Demoiselle Larrivée as a Happy Shadow in the *Castor* of the elder Rameau (February 26, 1773), and again takes the gracious part of Alcimadure "to the public's satisfaction" (March 17th); the *Mercure* seizes this new occasion to praise her "zeal," her "talent," her "beautiful voice" and her "taste in singing and acting." In a series of "lyric mélanges" (May 11th) she distinguishes the rôles of Nymph and Sylphide, and "renders perfectly" the Coronis in the *Amours des Dieux* of Mouret. Soon after, she alternates with Mlle. Duplant in the part of Théodore in *L'Union de l'Amour et des Arts*—ballet of a young composer, Floquet, whom one did not hesitate patriotically to compare with the German Orpheus:

Her noble playing, interesting and full of vitality, her brilliant voice, and agreeable and assured manner of singing, won her the approval of every spectator.

In 1774, the year in which *Iphigénie* was to open up a new era in the history of the Royal Academy of Music, Rosalie sang the rôle of Colette in the *Devin*, performed, together with other "fragments," on January 25th; then, in the absence of Larrivée, creator of the part of Eponine in Gossec's *Sabinus* (given for the first time on the 2d of February), she took this character, and, says the *Mercure*, sustained, played and sang it well. Finally, in *Iphigénie*, she sang "most agreeably several airs in the divertissements," as did also Mlle. Châteauneuf.

The death of the King caused the performances at the Opéra to be suspended from the 30th of April to the 15th of June, and the management had leisure to prepare *Orphée* and thus assure Chevalier Gluck a success, nay more, a triumph, which the first performances of *Iphigénie* had left still uncertain. At the re-opening, the *Carnaval du Parnasse* of Mondonville was given, in which Rosalie played "artistically and with vivacity the part of Thalie, in the absence of Mlle. Larrivée." In *Orphée* (August 2d) she shared "her favorite rôle," that of Cupid, with Mlle. Châteauneuf. This part fell to her again in Floquet's *Azolan* and was again rendered "perfectly."

It would not appear from the foregoing that Levasseur was destined later to incarnate the great tragic heroines of Gluck. Indeed, if one runs over the repertoire of her first eight years at the theatre just enumerated, one recognizes the fact—as did afterward de La Ferté, intendant des Menus-plaisirs of the King, in a memorandum to be cited later—that she played “at first small rôles and Cupids, and then rôles of more importance, but as an alternate merely or as an understudy.” Does she not figure at least seven times in the rôle of Cupid, and even after having played “a Greek” in *Iphigénie* does she not continue to sing as Cupid in the *Orphée* of Gluck, and in the *Azolan* of his “rival,” Floquet?

It was only toward 1770–71 that the Opéra, then under the direction of the composer Dauvergne, entrusted to her parts of any importance, or the creation of parts. This might be explained very simply by her length of service, amounting to five years in all, but in the “Triplet lyrique”—as the Royal Academy of Music was called at the time of Louis XV—advancement was not always solely on merit or even according to length of service. And it happens that precisely at the period when Rosalie started to rise in the theatrical hierarchy, there began, in all probability, her connection with a personage of importance to whom the directors of the Opéra and even the monarch himself could refuse nothing. Count Mercy-Argenteau,<sup>1</sup> ambassador of the Emperor of Austria to France, was an assiduous attendant at the Opéra. By taste as well as from his social position he was a patron of music; thus he figures on the list of subscribers of the Opéra for a quarter of a box in 1769; in 1772 he rents half a box in the first row “on the King’s side” in addition to a quarter of a box in the second row “on the Queen’s side.”

A police report of November, 1772, reads as follows in regard to the actress and her protector:

Mlle. Rosalie of the Opéra, to M. the Ambassador, who gives her 1,000 écus (3,000 livres) through me. He has had constructed for him a box at the Opéra in order to be able to watch her, but she still retains

<sup>1</sup>Mercy-Argenteau (Florimonde Claude), who was born at Liège in 1727 and died at London in 1794, came to Paris as ambassador in 1766, after having been at Petrograd. He received the Order of the Golden Fleece in 1770, then the Grand Cordon of Saint Etienne in 1785, as recompense for the great services which he had rendered his sovereign. In 1789–90 he succeeded in attaching Mirabeau to the Court party. He was afterward called by Leopold II to the Hague congress whose mission was to determine the fate of the United Provinces of the Netherlands. In 1794 he was sent as ambassador extraordinary to London, as will be explained further on.

M. Barroy as her *greluchon*<sup>1</sup> (Piton, *Paris sous Louis XV*, 1st series, p. 65-66).

According to M. Ad. Jullien:

Mercy-Argenteau was acquainted at first hand with the organization of the Royal Academy of Music, and its green room held no mysteries for him. In fact he played a rôle in the artistic affairs of France which would never have been suspected without the discovery of certain secret papers. Through his official position and the favor which he enjoyed at Court he exercised on occasion a most powerful influence on the decisions of the minister whose portfolio included the direction of the Opéra. Thus it was that he had served as semi-official intermediary in all the negotiations undertaken with the object of bringing Gluck to France. He had been able to further discreetly the artistic aims of the Dauphine as well as those of the German composer, and the latter had shown his gratitude by supporting with his great authority the already waning talent and arrogant pretensions of the leading actress of the Opéra, Rosalie Levasseur, whose avowed relations with Mercy-Argenteau had won for her the title of "the Ambassadors." (*Marie-Antoinette musicienne*, in *La Ville et la Cour au XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle*, p. 85).

There is a slight error in these statements. Rosalie was far from being the leading actress of the Opéra at the time of Gluck's arrival in Paris. On the contrary, as we shall see, it was the German composer who assisted her to achieve first rank, in place of Sophie Arnould.

According to the Marquis de Pimodan, who has recently written his biography, Count de Mercy-Argenteau formed his connection with Mlle. Rosalie about the year 1770; a liaison which was to have a certain influence upon the "creation" of the French masterpieces of Gluck, as witness the epistolary documents and scandalous chronicles of the period which we are about to scan. This date of 1770—the young actress then in all the *éclat* of her beauty, if not at the highest point of development of her talent—marks the installation of Rosalie in an establishment belonging to a Sieur Horry, in the rue des Bons-Enfants, near the Opéra. On the 12th of April she signed a lease for several years, to expire on the first of April, 1781, at a rental of 1100 livres, then a considerable sum. As for the Ambassador, in 1768 he had rented the palace of the Petit Luxembourg<sup>2</sup>, in the rue

<sup>1</sup>In the argot of gallantry of that period the term *greluchon* is used to designate the lover to whom a courtesan offers her favors gratuitously. Other writings of the time designate as rival of Mercy the famous Audinot, director of one of the *spectacles de la Foire* of the boulevards.

<sup>2</sup>The Petit-Luxembourg, occupied at present by the President of the Senate, passed into the hands of the Count de Provence (afterward Louis XVIII) and was confiscated the 7th of April, 1795, as belonging to an *émigré*.

de Vaugirard, whose quarters were opposite, near the rue des Fossoyeurs. Until 1776, the Ambassador and the actress lived in this way for the sake of appearances; then, whether because life in common had more attractions for him, or influenced perhaps by a feeling of jealousy, made keener by the remoteness of a mistress exposed to the temptations of life on the stage, Mercy had Rosaile move into his neighborhood. Canceling the lease of the house in the rue des Bons-Enfants, she rented one belonging to the Viscount de Breteuil in the quiet and provincial street which connects the Luxembourg with the Church of Saint Sulpice and which then bore the lugubrious name of rue des Fossoyeurs (now called rue Servandoni, after the architect of Saint Sulpice). On the 8th of July, 1776, a lease was signed before Master Foucault, a notary of Paris, for three, six, or nine years, beginning with the first of the following January and entailing an annual rent of 3,000 francs. Of course this change of abode on the part of the actress, an open secret for those *au courant* with theatrical affairs, did not pass unnoticed by the newsmongers on the lookout for fashionable gossip. The "Observateur anglois," for instance, speaking of the proximity of the Imperial ambassador and the pensioner of the Royal Academy of Music, says:

There are certain days of the week when they sup together, but no member of the household must be aware of the fact. The actress has a door communicating with His Excellency's house; when she is there no one is permitted access to M. the Ambassador; he is supposed to be engaged in serious matters.

It was in this house of the rue des Fossoyeurs (No. 19 or 20 of the present rue Servandoni) that Chevalier Gluck stayed twice during his sojourns in Paris: first in 1776, and again in 1777. "Chevalier Gluck, author of the operas *Orphée*, *Iphigénie* and *Alceste*, arrived day before yesterday evening," says the *Journal de Paris* of May 31, 1777, "his stopping place is in the rue des Fossoyeurs, next to the last porte-cochère on the left, entering from Saint Sulpice." The *Journal* does not add that the "German Orpheus" is at the house of the mistress of his ambassador and of his own chief interpreter, but a book of addresses belonging to the celebrated painter Joseph Vernet<sup>1</sup> leaves no doubt in regard to it: "M. Gluck, rue des Fossoyeurs, chez Mademoiselle Levasseur," notes the artist.

<sup>1</sup>See L. Lagrange, *Joseph Vernet et la Peinture de son temps au XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle*, p. 447-449.

Meanwhile, after the revival of *Iphigénie*, when she filled the principal rôle,<sup>1</sup> Rosalie Levasseur had acquired at the Opéra an importance which no one would have predicted from her first years on the stage. And naturally in the world behind the scenes her associates of both sexes spread malicious stories about "the Ambassadors," which were echoed outside by the contemporary chroniclers.

The importance of the rôles given her might well have excited the jealousy of actresses already in public favor, like Sophie Arnould, whose star was to pale before that of the "Ambassadors." The great and spirited Sophie had created *Iphigénie*, in which Rosalie played at first only the secondary rôle of a Greek; but when, after *Orphée*, *Iphigénie* was again presented the following year (January 10, 1775) in a series of successful and triumphant representations, Rosalie very soon secured the title rôle (for only a few evenings, it is true), and after that until she left the Opéra she was given all the important "creations." For her sensational début in *Iphigénie* Mercy-Argenteau (without doubt) had succeeded in getting the Queen, Madame and the King's brothers to be present. The *Mercure* on this occasion (April, 1775, p. 156) expresses itself at some length as to Rosalie's assumption of this part, ever afterward celebrated:

Mlle. Rosalie played and sang the rôle of Iphigénie with force and sentiment and was warmly applauded. The zeal of this young actress deserves great praise. She has a very beautiful voice, quick intelligence, spirit and sensibility, and she is the more useful to this Theatre because she appreciates her own talent and tries to perfect it by following the advice of the masters of the art. The Queen, Madame and the Princes honored the performance with their presence.

Nevertheless Mlle. Rosalie did not lavish herself on this piece or on others which she played from that time forth, although the principal rôles were reserved for her: Baucis in Gossec's *Phlémon et Baucis* (September 26th), Procris in Grétry's *Céphale et Procris* (created the 2d of May and revived the 28th of April, 1777), etc.

The creation of *Alceste*, given for the first time April 23, 1776, was also most important. She grasped this rôle "perfectly," the *Mercure* confines itself to saying, but despite this perfection she soon relinquished the part to one younger than herself, Mlle. Laguerre.

<sup>1</sup>The first French opera of Gluck had been "created" by Sophie Arnould (April 19, 1774); shortly afterward, following the fourth representation, the death of Louis XV interrupted the performances. *Iphigénie* was not staged again until after *Orphée*.

The appreciation of the *Mercure* is most laconic; indeed, it is remarkable that, although assuming the office of annalist of the Opéra, it devotes each month only a few lines to the new lyric tragedy which established indisputably Gluck's success in Paris. It did not even print Levasseur's name again for a whole year. On the other hand, the *Correspondance littéraire* of Grimm and Diderot (April, 1776) is somewhat more explicit and more kindly disposed toward the German master and his interpreter:

Mlle. Rosalie, now Mademoiselle Levasseur, filled the part of Alceste very intelligently. Although her cast of countenance and the natural play of her features are scarcely suited to the character, she made up for this defect by the charm and interest of her art. There are those who have even dared to doubt that Mlle. Arnould herself could have taken the part better—one may at least believe that Mlle. Rosalie expressed delightfully its character and sentiment.

The following year, however, after a new presentation of *Orphée* (December 31, 1776), the *Mercure* itself, finally won over by the Gluckist movement, which until then it had not dared approve, contains the following laudatory notice:

Mlle. Le Vasseur, M. Le Gros and M. Larrivée each deserve a share in the triumph of M. Gluck, for the ardor and intelligence with which they play their rôles. They catch the spirit of the Master perfectly, in their acting, their recitative, and their singing; they give themselves up with a happy abandon to accents of Nature, when their own temperaments seem no longer capable of guiding them.

A contemporary, one with a slanderous tongue, however, Pidansat de Mairobert, in his anonymous *Espion anglais* (Lettre xviii, June, 1776) judged as follows the singer to whose assistance the composer was to owe his triumph, and who in turn, if we may believe this witness, was much indebted to Gluck:

Of the actresses of rôles there is not one without some talent. . . Mademoiselle Le Vasseur is the most brilliant. Formed and trained by Chevalier Gluck himself, she has at a bound attained to a degree of perfection of which she was not thought capable. She is today the best actress on the operatic stage; the only thing to be regretted is that her appearance does not correspond to the majesty of her rôles.

But the actress whose help Gluck had judged so necessary to the triumph of the new school of music did not merely assume the appearance of majesty on the stage, she aspired to it also in private life, and when, with *Iphigénie*, she had finally and undeniably acquired first place in the Royal Academy of Music, she



conceived the idea that the name Rosalie was entirely too familiar and wished to change it; learning this, Palissot in his comedy *Les Courtisanes*, perhaps maliciously, gave this frivolous name to one of his characters.

Mlle. Rosalie, who, after the appearance of the comedy *Les Courtisanes* where one of the characters bears her name, abandoned this title and used instead her family name Le Vasseur, will henceforth be called Baroness. . . with a barony of 20 to 25,000 livres income, which M. le Comte de Mercy-Argenteau, the Emperor's ambassador, has purchased for her. It is inconceivable what an ascendancy this actress, ill-favored, plain, but lively and not without some talent, has acquired over the Minister, whom she rules with a tight hand. (Bachaumont, March 22, 1776).

The *Observateur anglois* (vol. 2, p. 163) makes two of its characters converse in almost the same terms:

*Milord.*—Who is it you call Mlle. Levasseur? Either I am mistaken or it is Rosalie of the Opéra.

*The Count.*—You are right; but she is no longer called so. You would never be able to guess why she changed her name. She did it after the production of Palissot's comedy *Les Courtisanes*, in which one of the heroines is called Rosalie. Wishing to have nothing in common with this character, she took her family name again.

*Milord.*—She has reformed then?

*The Count.*—She is supported by the Emperor's ambassador.

*Milord.*—Who? M. le Comte de Mercy-Argenteau?

*The Count.*—He himself. He is mad over her. She leads him as she will. . .

*Milord.*—The girl is not pretty, she is even plain; but she has a certain sprightliness which charms.

At the theatre, however, Rosalie contented herself with taking her father's name, and it is by this name that she is designated in the libretto of *Alceste*. In this opera, again according to Bachaumont, "she rendered the principal part with fine sentiment, expression and truth." "It is vexatious," adds the chronicler (April 24, 1776), "that her appearance does not correspond to the nobility of the part." And two days later:

It caused not a little surprise to see Mlle. Rosalie Le Vasseur assume the rôle of Alceste to the prejudice of Mlle. Arnoux [Sophie Arnould] who was better suited for it as an actress, and who moreover had the right to claim it by reason of priority in service. But when one realizes that Mlle. Rosalie is the mistress of M. le Comte de Mercy-Argenteau, the ambassador of the Emperor and the Empress-Queen, and that she has the greatest influence over him, that Chevalier Gluck is bound to be devoted to the interests of this Minister, and that he lodges

in the house of the courtesan, one understands how she succeeded in triumphing over her rival. The latter was of course very much vexed. She held Rosalie up to ridicule and stirred up a party against her; this drew forth on Rosalie's side an atrocious and disgusting lampoon which would not have produced the slightest sensation except in the foyers of the Opéra or between rivals other than two courtesans.

The *Correspondance secrète* of Métra shows well the tone of these polemics between the goddesses of the Opéra:

Paris, August 3, 1776. The dance enhances the impression of the charms of the swarm of libertine dancers on the stage, but the subject is an academic one which bores me to death. I love the music infinitely, I was penetrated by the greatest, though the coldest, admiration of the talent of your castrates; but Rosalie, whose talent is doubtless not equal to that of those virtuosos, transports me and moves all the faculties of my soul when she sings of the joy of dying for her husband [in *Alceste*]. Vestris is the God of the dance, Farinelli of singing, but I love better to let Allard fill me with pleasure by his dancing and Rosalie draw from me tears of sentiment by her singing, than to have those justly celebrated artists draw forth a tribute of admiration which they owe only to their intelligent application to their art.

... However I shall not yet leave the Royal Academy of Music; I wish to speak of one of its most celebrated members, Mademoiselle Arnoult, who by her impertinences and her loose speeches, which were laughed at while she was still pretty, has displeased our public. She has managed to lose the little credit she still had in certain circles, by her conduct toward M. Gluck, her rancor against her rival, Rosalie, and the intrigues she has instigated against *Alceste*. This girl can no longer use her charms to obtain toleration of the license she permits herself, which shocks equally those who are least fastidious and those who can bear affront. Two days ago she was promenading after supper in the Palais Royal. That is the hour when the belles take the air in the garden and night seems to banish all restraint at these reunions. The elderly courtesan was enjoying this privilege, when a voice interrupted her singing with lugubrious sounds, and one heard these words, addressed by a goddess of Hades to Alceste in the last act of that opera: "Charon calls thee, listen to his voice," etc. Poor Arnoult, disconsolate, quitted the garden, and since that time whenever she appears in public some kind soul begins to hum the air from *Alceste*. The gallant French are not indulgent, as you perceive, toward old women who have ceased to please them. (Tome III, p. 217-218).

Here we have, evidently, expressed clearly and without circumlocution, the opinion held with regard to Rosalie in certain *milieux* connected with the Opéra at the beginning of the reign of Louis XVI and of Marie Antoinette, who was Gluck's protector.

An ardent Gluckist, the Abbé Arnaud, in his *Soirée perdue à l'Opéra*, wrote in terms more flattering and deliberately admiring:

This actress, who until this time had appeared to be suited only to light rôles, has shown herself truly tragic and sublime in that of *Alceste*.

However, the evil reports, the "potins" collected in the *Mémoires secrètes* of Bachaumont and the *Correspondance secrète* of Métra, were not without foundation. If Rosalie Levasseur did not yet dare to call herself *baroness*, still all Paris knew that in 1772 her Ambassador had bought for her the domaine of Chennevières, near Conflans Sainte-Honorine, and that three years later he had acquired from the Castellanes the property of Neuville and the barony of Conflans.

The Austrian diplomat, a confirmed celibate, found such charm in Parisian life that, just as the time of Gluck's first arrival in Paris (January, 1774), his Empress having asked him, "not as sovereign but as friend," to succeed Kaunitz who had resigned, as head of affairs, Mercy did not fear to compromise himself by responding "candidly," by the next post, that he refused a burden too heavy for his shoulders; his impaired health, he said, demanded a régime incompatible with such an office. He added:

This régime requires frequent mental relaxation and much physical exercise. As soon as I deviate from it ever so slightly I feel the return of my former infirmities, which disappear again in a measure, when I am able to follow my ordinary mode of life. I have absolute need of intervals of recreation. On guard against myself, I have scrupulously considered whether I am not influenced in this matter by some accidental reason or inclination; I have asked myself if I would not regret leaving Paris, and I am confident that any such regret would by no means sway my decision in so important a matter. However, I must avow that the pain of separating from Mme. the Dauphine would be inexpressible. The princess, who found me here on her arrival when everything was new to her and in many regards must have appeared strange, honored me then with her confidence and still continues to so honor me, through habit and her experience of my uprightness, my fidelity and my respectful attachment.<sup>1</sup>

One can but admire the diplomatic cleverness with which Mercy attributed to a loyal attachment for the daughter of Maria Theresa the decision influenced by a liaison which must have been as well known in Vienna as in Paris. Doubtless this subtlety did not deceive the sovereign, who was content to leave in France an ambassador so devoted to her family. And Mercy did not cease to interest himself—with a purpose—in the Gluckist

<sup>1</sup>*Correspondance secrète entre Marie-Thérèse et le comte Mercy-Argenteau, II, p. 90-91.*

movement, thus serving the artistic preferences of the Queen who in the month of May of that same year ascended the throne of France, and also the inclination of his heart, which was to end only with his life.

Some months after addressing this letter to Maria Theresa, Mercy, then absent from Paris, received from Chevalier Gluck himself a letter dated the 16th of August—consequently fifteen days after the *première* of *Orphée*—in which he read, among other things,

I had hoped to be near enough to be able to pay my respects occasionally, and that we might play some good music together. . . Your Excellency has arranged everything admirably; singers will be developed suitable for the operas as I produce them; to create a school of singing other conditions would be necessary. However, I shall begin to give all my attention to Mademoiselle Rosalie and I hope that she will become an admirable singer.

Thus everything conspired to make of Mademoiselle Rosalie the star of the Royal Academy of Music: her style carefully formed by Gluck, whose dramatic exactions found in her a docile pupil, she achieved an undeniable triumph in *Alceste*. But this success resulted without doubt in turning the singer's head. The following anecdote shows how arrogant the "baroness" or "ambassadress" became toward her associates at the Opéra.

About the time that Gluck's masterpiece was first presented, the Royal Academy of Music had staged *Adèle de Ponthieu*, a rather mediocre work by Saint-Marc with music by Berton (played for the first time in 1772). The celebrated Larrivée sang the part of Guillaume, and Rosalie, jealous of his success which she claimed stood in the way of her own, persuaded Mercy, it was said, to put a stop to the performances of *Adèle*. The report spread that for 25 louis Larrivée had promised to give up his rôle. This incident formed the theme of a *Chanson sur ce que Larrivée a reçu 25 louis pour ne pas chanter dans l'opéra d'Adèle*, in which the actress, her protector, the Bailli du Roulet, librettist of *Iphigénie*, and even Larrivée himself, were hit off strikingly and disrespectfully. These indecorous verses were sung to the air of the *Bourgeois de Chartres*.

The year following, 1777, was that of *Armide*, a new triumph for Gluck and for his chief interpreter. It was to mark a change, as one thought, in the life of the Ambassador and his lady, but the latter, as often happens in such cases, preferred to enjoy a few years more of life on the boards before retiring to her estates.

A *Correspondance secrète* published by M. de Lescure makes this statement (April 27):

It is said that M. le Comte de Mercy is about to resign his ambassadorship and, weary of the world, retire to his estates in France, where he will lead the life of a philosopher, or rather of an Epicurean. He has vowed the most tender affection for a Demoiselle Rosalie of the Opéra, and he may trample under foot his German prejudices and marry this beauty in order to satisfy their consciences. Tried experience doubtless has convinced him that this Rosalie will ensure his happiness more certainly than would any princess with a hundred and twenty-eight quarterings.

The Ambassador felt so strongly the conviction which the *Correspondance secrète* attributed to him, that the following year when he left the Petit Luxembourg to take up his residence on the boulevard, the ex-Rosalie came and established herself in his neighborhood, rue de Provence, in that Chaussée d'Antin which was then the fashion with the "demoiselles du monde."

By an arrangement made in 1778 Mercy purchased for his embassy the use of a property situated on the Boulevard Montmartre (to-day number 16) paying the sum of 275,000 francs to the financier Laborde. This unfurnished house, which may be seen to-day, much disfigured by additions to its height (it belongs to the Compagnie d'Assurances générales sur la Vie), consisted originally of two stories with eleven windows in the façade, surmounted by a balcony in Italian style supported by consoles. In the centre was a projection with three windows. The hôtel of the Imperial ambassador must have had a grand air at the time when it was built on the boulevard which from that time became the favorite promenade of the Parisians and to which the installation of the Opéra near the Porte-Saint-Martin—after the fire of 1781—gave still more life and movement.

While the Ambassador was installing himself on the boulevard the "Ambassadress" was doing the same in the Chaussée d'Antin, on ground she had acquired in the rue de Provence, building for herself a little house where Mercy, his affairs once over, came to rest from the fatigues of his official life. Numerous papers preserved in the National archives show that the house of the singer was furnished sumptuously; the accounts of builders and tradesmen, among the papers of Levasseur seized at the time of the Revolution, enable one to follow for several years her large household expenses and to penetrate if only a little into her town life. Thus, the bill of Jacob, "joiner of furniture," dated

1778, informs us that he furnished to Rosalie: a bed, four arm-chairs "à la reine," two easy-chairs also "à la reine," and other furniture, to the amount of 809 liv. 10 sols. On October first, Rosalie, who was thrifty, settled this account through her architect, Perlin, for 749 l. 10 sols. Other papers from the same source tell of the horses and carriages of the singer whom even her tradesmen still spoke of disrespectfully as Rosalie. Consulting the receipts of the same period (December 1778 and January 1781) we find that she was a subscriber to the *Journal de Paris*—the first daily paper printed in France which sang the praises of Gluck and his interpreters; and the receipts covering a period of several years prove that the singer paid regularly her "capitation des Menus" and the 150 livres claimed by the 26th "Compagnie des Gardes-françaises de la Chaussée d'Antin."

Several letters from a certain Nicodemi who was afterward deputy to the *Etats-Généraux* from Valenciennes, testify to the esteem in which the future representative of the people held his "dear and immortal countrywoman," as he calls her (letters of 1777 and 1782). And when he came to Paris as a member of the *Etats-Généraux*, the deputy accepted the hospitality of Levasseur at her hôtel in the rue de Provence.

The sojourn of the singer in the Chausseé d'Antin marks the period of her greatest lyric success; that in which the *Journal de Paris* sings her praises, defending at the same time the composer and his interpreter against the attacks of La Harpe and of Mar-montel, trucklers either to the former French school or to the more brilliant and more modern Italian school.

After the great success of *Iphigénie en Tauride*, in which she proved herself incomparable, the singer received from Baron Tschoudi, the future librettist of the *Danaïdes*, the following quatrain, flattering to her, if mediocre as poetry:

Par l'accord énergique et du geste et du chant,  
Elle anime de Gluck la tragique harmonie;  
Vers l'immortalité ce sublime génie  
Marche appuyé sur son talent.

(By the union of gesture and song  
She gives life to the tragic harmony of Gluck;  
To immortality this sublime genius  
Moves, sustained by her talent.)

At another time homage not less agreeable was offered her by a young poetess who responded to the gracious name of Aurore. The Demoiselle Aurore, about 18 years of age, was a mere chorus



singer at the Opéra. She was gifted with a certain poetic talent, in the expression of which, it was said, she was not without the aid of the librettist Saint-Marc, or that of his young rival Guillard (librettist of *Iphigénie en Tauride*), and the *Journal de Paris* gladly published her verses in praise of Raucourt, of the Marquis de Saint-Marc himself, or of Sophie Arnould. Following is the verse which the young choriste addressed to the protagonist of the *Electre* of Guillard and Lemoine, after the first representation (July 2, 1782):

O sublime Lycée, ôh Théâtre François,  
Tes Lekains, tes Clairons, avaient fondé  
ta gloire . . . . .

Ces grands talents qui t'illustrèrent  
Aujourd'hui, nous les possédons.

Levasseur, L'arrivée égalent ces beaux  
noms

Qu'à l'immortalité tes fastes consac-  
rèrent.

Inimitable Levasseur,  
D'Oreste infortuné noble et sublime  
sœur,

Lorsque de tout Paris vous capturez  
l'hommage,

Distinguez-vous mon suffrage?

Que peut-il être auprès du sien?

Mais Electre m'a tant émue,

Qu'au hasard de n'être point lue,

A l'hommage public j'ose mêler le mien.<sup>1</sup>

Oh sublime Lycée, oh Théâtre François,  
Thy Lekains, thy Clairons, founded thy  
glory,

Those great talents which made thee  
illustrious

Once more we possess them.

Levasseur, L'arrivée, equal these great  
names

Consecrated to immortality in thy  
annals.

Inimitable Levasseur,

Noble and sublime sister of unhappy  
Orestes,

Having captured the homage of all  
Paris

Will you take note of mine?

What is it in comparison with the  
greater?

But Electra has so moved me

That at the hazard of remaining unread  
With the public homage I dare to  
mingle mine.

The *Journal de Paris* did not always publish matter so agreeable to the "Ambadressress" as the foregoing. Although thoroughly devoted to her and to her protector it was obliged at times to insert disagreeable explanations. Thus, having mentioned Beaumesnil in terms of only moderate praise, after a performance of Rameau's *Castor et Pollux*,<sup>2</sup> that singer, vexed at being supplanted by Levasseur, addressed the editor in the following terms:

<sup>1</sup>This was reproduced by Campardon in his *L'Académie royale de Musique au XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle*, art. *Levasseur*. The Demoiselle Aurore, whose real name was Anne Domergue, born in 1765, remained at the Opéra but three years, from 1782 to 1785.

<sup>2</sup>Revived on the 11th of October, Rameau's opera had been sung first by Rosalie, then, on the 18th and 20th of December, by Beaumesnil. The *Journal de Paris* wrote of this occasion, that Le Vasseur had decided to yield to Beaumesnil the rôle of Télémaque, although "her prodigious success in the operas *Iphigénie*, *Alceste* and *Armide* has not caused her to abandon the genre of the older operas: all music lovers have remarked with satisfaction that she has not permitted herself any changes and that she has preserved in her manner of singing the expression and all the effects of which this music is capable. She was greatly applauded.

Mlle. Rosalie, called Le Vasseur, whose début preceded mine by two months, at first substituted for Mme. Larrivée in her rôles of Cupid and of shepherdesses; and for seven years was content with so doing. Then, profiting by my absence, she threatened MM. the Directors with her retirement and so obtained the privilege of singing in my place the rôle of Télémaque which I had played two or three months before; six months afterward this opera was given again and MM. the Directors restored to me my rôle and my rights. It is known that since then M. the Chevalier Gluck has done her the honor of giving her the parts of Alceste and Armide and has adopted her as his leading singer. He could not make a better choice. But I ask the public if the preference shown her by M. Gluck warrants her monopolizing everything (See the *Journal* of December 21). At the time of the last representation of *Castor* I was ill and the Administration gave her my rôle of Télémaque, but I thought that after 18 performances I might ask to be allowed to play it; she did not refuse, but she did not grant me the favor of appearing in it three times in succession, as is undeniably the custom even in the case of the most ordinary substitute.

Humiliated by the pretensions of Mlle. Le Vasseur and having to-day no rôle of my own, I refrain from crying *Stop thief* and abandon the field just at the moment when by my twelve consecutive years of service I have the right to expect the place made vacant by the retirement of Mlle. Arnould. (*Journal de Paris*, Dec. 27, 1778).

Despite her resignation, given *coram populo* in an angry impulse not uncommon with singers vexed by the success of a rival, Mlle. Beaumesnil, whose talent was greatly appreciated by the Directors and by the public, remained two years longer at the Opéra. She had made her début there on the 27th of November, 1766, in *Sylvie*, a ballet by Laujon, with music by Berton and Trial. After 1774 she had replaced Sophie Arnould in the rôle of Eurydice in *Orphée*, and had then sung the principal parts in Gluck's scores, in *Echo et Narcisse* in 1779, in *Iphigénie en Tauride* the same year, and in *Iphigénie en Aulide* the year following. She retired at the end of 1780, when she married. Born in Paris, July 30th, 1748, Henriette Adélaïde de Villars, called Beaumesnil, died in 1813.

The quarrels between Gluck's favorite interpreter and fellow singers better qualified than she from the musical point of view to take the principal rôles, never ceased to amuse the habitués of the Opéra or to set at odds the influential protectors of those ladies. The new director of the Opéra, de Vismes de Valgay, who merely filled the interim, as it were, between the two terms of Dauvergne, drew a certain profit from their bickerings, each priestess of Polyhymnia having her partisans, and the attraction of their rival interpretations insuring still further success to the creations of Gluck, so novel to French ears.

Meanwhile the Theatre did not fail to feel the effects of these internal dissensions, which sometimes became acute. Thus one may read in the *Mémoires secrètes* of Bachaumont, date of February 18, 1779, that

the Lyric theatre is in a state of anarchy, which is only increased by the liberty granted. . . Mlle. Rosalie, indignant at a letter in the *Journal de Paris*, in which Mlle. Beaumesnil complains of the wrongs done her in favor of her junior in service, took to task at the theatre (that is to say on the stage) the Bailli de La Tour, lover of the latter. As secretary of Mlle. Beaumesnil, the Bailli de La Tour replied in the contemptuous terms which she had drawn upon herself. She threatens not to play again unless an apology be made her. It is known that M. de Mercier-Argenteau, the Emperor's ambassador, upholds the prima donna.

There is always danger that the Opéra may be upset by the humors of these Messieurs and Demoiselles at the very time of a performance.

Sure of the all-powerful protection which covered her, Rosalie Levasseur, not content with crushing her rivals in the town as well as at the theatre, did not hesitate to importune with her demands the administration of the "Maison du Roi," which through the minister of the "Maison," Amelot, and through the Intendant des Menus-plaisirs, controlled with a high hand the Comédie-Française and the Opéra.

Not satisfied with having achieved a salary of 9,000 livres—at that time a maximum sum—as prima donna at the Opéra, she was appointed one of the King's musicians, and in this capacity received a stipend of 1,000 livres. Finding even this amount insufficient, Levasseur urged that it be doubled, and in order to get her way used the powerful means at her disposal. At least we may infer this from the following letter of Papillon de La Ferté to his Minister, which shows what point her pretensions had reached:

This morning I saw Mademoiselle Levasseur, who stopped on her way to her country-seat, accompanied by her hunting dogs. She told me that she had sent her ass on ahead, as she was going to take the milk for some time in order to get herself into condition to continue her work; but her appearance did not cause me much uneasiness as to her health. She brought me the originals of your two letters and gave me the two copies enclosed, but I do not see what more she can demand, for the favor of 1,000 livres increase in Court appointments is already a considerable gift, which should have put an end to her pretensions. To give her such an extraordinary gratuity when she already has a salary of 9,000 livres, would cause general indignation; to give her a pension in addition to her salary while she is still at the Opéra would turn things upside down. But if we let her go, especially just on the arrival of M. Gluck, the ambassadors, Chevalier du Roley [du Roulet], and all

of her protectors would raise a hue and cry. M. Gluck would cause difficulties, and important personages would mix in the affair. I confess that it is not an easy thing to decide on a course of action, especially when one considers M. Gluck. The most expedient plan is, I believe, to inform the Queen, and then for you to send for Mlle. Levasseur and show her what a favor was done her in increasing her salary at Court, which the King granted only for as long a time as she continues her services at the Opéra.

This letter should be placed in all probability at the beginning of the year 1782, since there was found among the papers seized in the singer's house, at the time of the Revolution, "a letter written by La Ferté, without superscription, but which there is reason to believe was addressed to the said Le Vasseur, to announce that he would have her placed on the Government list for 2,000 livres; said letter dated March 2, 1782."<sup>1</sup>

The service which Levasseur rendered the Theatre was, however, hardly in proportion either to her salary or to her demands, and toward the end of the year 1783, when the Opéra was preparing to represent *Les Danaïdes*—then thought to be by Gluck—and the Chevalier was expected in Paris, the Intendant des Menus declared in his report to his Minister that the Demoiselle Le Vasseur gave "poor service," was "disinclined to do her duty" and was of "very little use."<sup>2</sup>

Among other papers from the Maison du Roi preserved in the National archives, we read a little later this "Letter from M. de La Ferté, intendant des Menus-plaisirs, to the minister of the Maison du Roi, relating to Mlle. Levasseur, called Rosalie, her claims and her artistic career":

Monseigneur, Mademoiselle Levasseur sent to ask me for an appointment this morning at eight o'clock; consequently I awaited her, not doubting that M. the Ambassador (who, she had added, was an old friend of yours) had asked you to obtain the interview, and that she was absolutely ignorant of the contents of the "mémoire" and of the object of the request, for otherwise she would have begged me to use my influence with you in her behalf. I thought it best to feign ignorance of what she desired, and in order not to give her the opportunity to acquaint me with her wishes, I took refuge in vague compliments, saying that I had gone to Versailles yesterday with the sole purpose of enquiring about your health, and that I had met there Monsieur the Ambassador who also found you very much engaged, and had seized the opportunity as he was leaving to pay him my respects; this was the way in which I thought best to respond to her little trick, and we separated, after having talked at length of the Opéra and of the

<sup>1</sup>Archives départementales de la Seine, Domaines.

<sup>2</sup>Ad. Jullien, *L'Opéra secret*, p. 133.

retired life which she told me she led. I enclose, Monseigneur, with her rather ill-natured note to you on the subject of *Sieur Larrivée*, *Dame St.-Huberty* and *Demoiselle Heinel*, the true account of their services, so that you will be able to judge if what she says has any foundation. And now I will give you the facts concerning her. *Mademoiselle Le Vasseur* entered the service of the *Opéra* in 1766, and played at first unimportant parts and Cupids, then for eight or nine years she took more important rôles, but merely as an alternate or as substitute; and it is only since the retirement of *demoiselles Larrivée*, *Beaumesnil* and *Arnould* that she has been entrusted with leading parts, that is to say, for the last seven years. When *Mesdemoiselles Arnould* and *Beaumesnil* made their début at the *Opéra* they were at once given the principal rôles, that is the difference between their cases and that of *Mademoiselle Levasseur*; she has, it is true, been successful since the retirement of those actresses, especially in the parts of *Iphigénie en Tauride*, *Alceste*, and *Armide*; and it was after the success of these three rôles that she demanded, in 1779, a special salary of 9,000 livres, which has caused much trouble at the *Opéra* and has been a source of discontent and quarreling.

*Mademoiselle Levasseur* was received into the *Maison du Roi* in 1773, at a salary of 1,000 livres, and although she gave practically no service there, by special favor this was increased by 1,000 livres; one reasonably supposed that she would not make any further demands. You can judge, Monseigneur, from the statement enclosed, which is exact, whether she can justly claim anything more. It appears that she sang in only 100 of the 600 performances given during 4 years; which makes, with what she received from the *Opéra*, 360 livres for each appearance. After this explanation, Monseigneur, you will perhaps consider that she has been well paid if she retires from the *Opéra* with a pension of 2,000 livres, which is not properly due until after 20 years of good service, and then *only to singers who from the beginning assumed leading parts* and conformed with all the regulations; the example of *Sieur Larrivée* who gave thirty years of service as leading man, cannot serve for *Mademoiselle Levasseur*, who counts but 6 or 7 as leading actress. . .

De La Ferté.

Paris, January 14, 1784.

These observations of the *Intendant des Menus-plaisirs*, guardian of rules which he was often obliged to see violated by command of his superiors, were all that is fair and reasonable, and his fears of being assailed by complaints from other performers were but too well justified. The Minister responded without delay to the letter of January 14th.

It is both necessary and desirable that I should please M. le Comte de Mercy in the matter relating to *Demoiselle Levasseur*.

These few words, in which Breteuil confessed himself to be powerless in the matter, were an order for La Ferté, who replied, on February 6th,

In the present state of affairs, very perplexing for the Opéra and annoying for you, Monseigneur, I believe you will consider it most important that the arrangement made for Demoiselle Levasseur be kept absolutely secret; and that the 1,000 livres be drawn from the Royal treasury, M. \* \* \* exacting her word of honor never to mention it to anyone; for not only would Dame de Saint-Huberty demand perhaps quadruple her present salary, but all the other actors who consider themselves indispensable would do likewise. This affair then, in order to avoid dangerous consequences and perhaps also annoyance for yourself, Monseigneur, demands much discretion on the part of Demoiselle Levasseur. I hope that you will pardon my giving this advice, suggested by my respectful attachment for yourself and my desire that you may enjoy if possible a tranquil administration.

Papillon de La Ferté—the “musical potentate,” the “king of the coulisses,” of whom M. Ad. Jullien has given so vivid a portrait,—and following him a young scholar, M. René Farges—displays his character in the response to Breteuil from which we have taken these few lines. In his delicate functions as director of the amusements of Court and town, daily obliged to reconcile the demands of the actors and the solicitations of their protectors with the welfare of the King’s service, he had need of all his resources as a cunning diplomat not to provoke constantly revolts difficult to quell in the “Tripot lyrique.” Thus, while refusing on one hand, he promised on the other, and generally, as in the case of the “Ambadress,” he ended by conciliating all sides, making each one promise silence, secrecy, etc.: the secret of PUNCHINELLO, soon whispered about among all the followers of Polyhymnia and TERPSICHORE.

What de La Ferté had foreseen came to pass without delay; no sooner had Levasseur obtained this satisfaction, in which her amour-propre was more concerned than her ambition, than the Intendant des Plaisirs was assailed with similar requests. In April, the celebrated Guimard, like Rosalie, demanded an increase of 1,000 livres; and La Ferté, after having mildly refused, under pressure finished by consenting, demanding the same secrecy from the “priestess of Terpsichore.” Then came the “god of the dance,” Vestris; then Saint-Huberty, etc., etc. Once the door was opened to the abuse it became impossible to close it.

But to return to the years when it seems that Rosalie Levasseur began to pay little attention to her duties at the Royal Academy of Music. She contented herself with giving from time to time a short series of performances, in order to monopolize the great rôles of Gluck or the “creations” which the Directors were obliged to give her. Thus, having again taken the part of Procris (May



23, 1777) she soon abandoned it for that of *Iphigénie*, being replaced "to advantage" by Mlle. Châteauneuf, says the *Mercur*. And on the revival of *Ernelinde*—revised by its composer, Philidor, after the manner of Gluck—she exacted the principal rôle, which she sang "with much intelligence and expression." Then came *Armide* (September 23, 1777) followed by *Alceste* (October 17th) and the *première* of the *Roland* of Piccinni (January 27, 1778), in which opera she soon yielded the part of Angélique to Demoiselle Laguerre, a younger rival and one already to be reckoned with. Upon the revival of Rameau's *Castor et Pollux* (in October) she was applauded in the celebrated air "Tristes apprêts, pâles flambeaux," "which is not without expression," judges the *Mercur*, "although perhaps a little monotonous in its simplicity."

The creation of *Iphigénie en Tauride* (May 18, 1779) marked the apogee of her talent. Upon the revival of *Philémon et Baucis* (April 29, 1780), the editor of the *Mercur* asserted that, like her comrade Larrivée, she no longer produced the necessary illusion in the second act, for "Mlle. Levasseur did not always sing with the accuracy and good taste that one has the right to expect at the Opéra."

Although, apropos of the creation of *Armide*, the reviewer of the *Mercur*, who signed his critiques "S", confined himself to saying that the actress appeared "to have made some progress," he dwelt in a more interesting fashion on her interpretation of the rôle of *Iphigénie en Tauride*:

What we owe in addition to M. Gluck is that he has enabled us to enjoy the rare talent of Mlle. Le Vasseur, unappreciated until his coming for lack of a rôle suitable to develop it. Never was the spirit of a part grasped with more understanding or penetrated more profoundly. Always noble, touching and true in her gestures as in her tones, she expressed all the *nuances* without affectation, and knew how to give passion to her acting without losing the grace which is the charm of her sex. Although her voice was still affected by a severe cold from which she had not entirely recovered, her singing was pure, in good taste, full of soul and expression. (*Mercur de France*, June 5, 1779, p. 58-59.)

We will add that she played the part but eleven times at the time of its "creation."

As early as in the month of August of the year preceding, Grimm had judged that the singer's career was drawing to a close, when he wrote, after a performance of *Iphigénie en Tauride*:



The sublime rôle of Iphigénie has finished by killing Mademoiselle Rosalie Levasseur; she has had several hemorrhages and it is to be feared that she will have to renounce the stage entirely. Two débutantes who have alternated with her in the rôles of Iphigénie and Angélique, Mesdemoiselles Girardin and Dupuy, inspire the hope that we may see her place filled again some day.

Nevertheless, she afterward created the rôle of Andromaque in the opera of the same name which Grétry, writing under the influence of Gluck, produced on June 6th, 1780. She played this part

with an intelligence worthy of the highest praise. It is long [said the editor of the *Mercure*, probably the littérateur de Charmois, struck by the tragic power of the actress] since we have seen at the Opéra anything so engaging, so interesting, as her acting in the scene where, having bathed with her tears the son who is about to be torn from her, she yields to the desire of Pyrrhus, in order to preserve this adored image of the great Hector.

Upon a revival of *Alceste*, following the failure of Lulli's *Persée*, the same journal stated that her acting added "much to the value of the work" and that the rôle of Alceste was "one of those whose conception does her the most honor."

The burning of the Opéra in June, 1781, having reduced the Royal Academy of Music to the proportions of the little stage of the Menus-Plaisirs (the future Conservatoire) Rosalie Levasseur waited before making her reappearance for the completion of the hall of the Porte-Saint-Martin, which was opened on the 27th of October of the same year. On the 11th of the following May she took from Saint-Huberty the rôle of the second *Iphigénie*, which she had created originally.

The impression engraved on our hearts by Mlle. Levasseur each time that she has rendered the part of Iphigénie en Tauride somewhat spoils the effect of Mlle. Saint-Huberty's conception of the character.

said the *Mercure* of March 30th, after a performance given by the latter; and six weeks later we read:

Mlle. Levasseur, after a long illness, reappeared as Iphigénie en Tauride. She was received with overwhelming applause, and proved that it was her due by the manner in which she impersonated the character.

After this reappearance, so favorably received by the public, Rosalie Levasseur had the honor of playing ("with much spirit

and intelligence, as is usual with her") the part of Télémaque in Rameau's *Castor et Pollux*, given in the month of June before the Comte du Nord (the name under which the King of Denmark was traveling in France). Later she created the principal rôle in the *Electre* of Lemoine, giving "new proof of the superiority of her talent," and appeared in Monsigny's *Aline, reine de Golconde*, acting "with much naïveté and cleverness the scene in which she reappears in the dress of a shepherdess before the eyes of Saint-Phar, who was represented by Laïs."

Her last creation was that of Armide in Sacchini's *Renaud* (February 28, 1783). She filled this rôle indifferently and for the first three performances only, after which she was replaced by Saint-Huberty. On March 22, 1783, the *Mercure* commented on

the intelligence, the nobility, and the truth of expression which one has a right to expect from the actress who has played for six years with so much success and in so superior a manner the most important rôles of this theatre. But we cannot dissimulate the fact that her singing fell below what one had the right to expect. Whether the music of this new part is not suited to her voice and her method of singing, or whether her vocal organ, fatigued by forced and continuous effort, has lost something of its flexibility, one perceived, especially in the beautiful cantabiles of the second act, that her singing lacked the grace, the fullness and the sweetness demanded by this style of music. The public, as ungrateful toward her as Renaud toward poor Armide, forgetting all the pleasure for which it has been indebted to her in the past and all that it will owe in the future to actresses for whom she will serve as model, received her with distressing coldness. After the third performance she gave up the part of Armide.

But according to M. Adolphe Jullien in his "L'Opéra secret au XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle"

The talented artiste saved the work from failure and obtained full justice for this score, too hastily condemned, which includes pages of the first rank. She rescued at one stroke the poor musician, who was making his début at Paris, and the honor of the Opéra, which by canceling its agreement with Sacchini (as there had been a question of doing before this trial and as would have been done without doubt after a failure) might have lost those two masterpieces, *Dardanus* and *Œdipe à Colone*.

Despite this favorable criticism, the actress who had created Iphigénie, Alceste and Armide, was hardly in condition to sing this new Armide; and doubtless it was in consideration of the seven or eight years of remarkable service rendered the Opéra that she was entrusted with this her last "creation." Enceinte, she was obliged to ask in the following month a semester's leave

of absence from the Committee governing the Royal Academy of Music. The Committee sent a report to the minister of the Maison du Roi "relating to Mademoiselle Levasseur, called Rosalie," which reads as follows:

The Committee has the honor to report to the Minister that Mademoiselle Le Vasseur appeared at its meeting of last Monday to ask for leave of absence for six months counting from this date.

The Committee has the honor to beg the Minister to prescribe what reply shall be made to the request of Mademoiselle Le Vasseur.

Signed: Dauberval, Rey, De La Suze, Gossec, La Salle, Lainez<sup>1</sup>.

The Minister replied three days later, the 24th of April,

The advantage to us of Demoiselle Le Vasseur's talent is too valuable for us not to try to induce her to sing, especially in the summer, as a means of attracting the public during a season unfavorable for the stage. Moreover, she ought to make up for the time she lost last year, when she sang but twenty-seven times; and I believe her too honest to ask for her salary if she were to go six months without singing, since it was only in the expectation of diligent service that a special stipend was granted her.

Amelot.

However the Minister could not do otherwise than grant the asked-for leave, and on the 14th of September, 1783, in the rue Saint-Honoré, the actress was delivered of a son, who was baptized Alexandre Henri Joseph, "father and mother unknown." The infant thus certified was to bear later the title of Chevalier de Noville.

Rosalie returned subsequently to the Theatre; after Saint-Huberty's triumph in Piccinni's *Didon*, given for the first time on December 1st, Levasseur took again, on the 21st, the title rôle in *Iphigénie en Tauride*.

The following year she appeared more and more rarely at the Opéra. A memorandum of La Ferté, toward the end of 1783, criticizes her without circumlocution, as follows:

She served satisfactorily for 4 years. Has done scarcely anything for several years past, and from now on will be able to do nothing; her abilities appear to be unequal to the modern *genre*. One cannot dissemble the fact that she shows great lack of consideration and that she costs

<sup>1</sup>Archives nationales, Maison du Roi, O<sup>1</sup> 637. Dauberval was the celebrated dancer, Rey the composer-conductor of the orchestra, director of the King's music and of that of the Opéra; De La Suze was "master of rôles," La Salle secretary in perpetuity of the Royal Academy of Music and one of the stars of song of the period (1747-1822), who retired in 1812.

the Opéra dear, making all sorts of claims as to her wardrobe which is never expensive enough or fine enough. The special salary of 9,000 livres which she obtained has not only disgusted her associates, seeing that she does not earn it, but has influenced others to make similar demands, and this is necessarily a burden upon the Administration. It is nine months since she last appeared on the stage; she has been engaged at the Opéra for eighteen years, but as leading singer only since the retirement of Mesdemoiselles Arnould and Beaumesnil. If one granted her a pension of 2,000 livres, which is not her due until after 20 years of service, it would be favoring her, for she has the right to only 1,500 livres; but even at the rate of 2,000 livres it would be a good bargain for the Opéra.<sup>1</sup>

If the Administration made a "good bargain" by the departure of the singer who nevertheless had done so much for its prosperity in sustaining by her power as a tragedian if not with a flawless voice, the Gluck repertoire, it was because it had found a worthy substitute for Levasseur in the person of Saint-Huberty. After *Didon* the latter proceeded to create the rôle of Hypermnestre in Salieri's *Les Danaïdes*, represented for the first time this same year of 1784 (April 26). One may imagine that there was a struggle between the two queens of the theatre to secure this rôle, now one of the most celebrated of the older repertoire. The Ambassador seemed much interested in the success of the work, and six days before the *première*, he wrote to the Emperor, Joseph II,

Responding to Your Majesty's order that I render an account of Salieri's opera, I believe that I may announce beforehand, from what I gather to be the general opinion, that the work will have the greatest success. The Queen is entirely satisfied with the music; but it appears to me that the "maître de chapelle" is not so pleased with the talent of the actors who are to perform it.<sup>2</sup>

Do not the terms of this letter seem to have been dictated by Rosalie herself, and did not Mercy-Argenteau with much prudence confine himself to repeating the opinion of the actress superseded by a younger and happier rival, the genial Saint-Huberty? Since the Administration of the Opéra had adjudged her inadequate to the modern *genre*, and by this term were designated without doubt the works of the Gluckists Sacchini and Salieri, and perhaps Piccinni also—successful imitators of the Master's genius—there remained for Rosalie Levasseur nothing but to

<sup>1</sup>Arch. nat. o<sup>1</sup> 637. cf. La Ferté's letter of January 14, 1784, which was clearly inspired by this report.

<sup>2</sup>Welvert, *loc. cit.*

consider retirement. She appeared—perhaps for the last time—at Court for the gala performance arranged in honor of the King of Sweden (June 14, 1784), then one fine evening she disappeared from the Opéra, never to return.

Her pension liquidated quite to her advantage, Rosalie Levasseur made, about this time, important investments of money. She thought to live the rest of her life with the Diplomat, to whom it was falsely believed she had long been bound by a secret marriage and who allowed her a life annuity of 18,000 francs. But Destiny disposed otherwise, the Revolution supervened, and one may say that the actress had no more repose until her death, which did not occur until at the time of the Restoration.

Mercy-Argenteau also, anticipated gliding with his mistress through an existence free from care<sup>1</sup>, and when Rosalie was quitting finally the scene of her successes, he wrote to Kaunitz:

For nearly two years my impaired health has warned me that I am no longer fit for affairs . . . In my isolated position, without other family than some very distant cousins, and approaching the age of sixty, my physical and moral existence does not admit of any other reasonable desire than that of ensuring for myself between life and death an interval of tranquillity, and the enjoyment of this repose, either in the country of Liège, my native land, my birthplace and the cradle of my family, or on certain scattered estates which I possess in France and in Lorraine, and which will be a retreat the more agreeable to me in that I shall carry to it tastes in accord with my years, the most essential being the fondness which I have always had for rural occupations.

Fine plans, which were not to be realized. Mercy-Argenteau remained ambassador of Austria-Hungary until the Revolution, which was the beginning for him as for so many others, of a new life, very different from that anticipated either by himself or by his companion.

The 6th of September, 1792, at the height of the storm, his estate of Chennevières was sacked, under the pretence that he had arms concealed there. The peasants of the Seine-et-Oise profited by the occasion to empty his cellars, which contained not less than twelve to fifteen thousand bottles, of a value which he estimated in a letter to Kobentzl at 52,466 livres.

"The dusk of the life of this diplomat was hardly in keeping with its former brilliant *éclat*" wrote a Belgian historian who spoke of him as "a most polished man, an amateur of precious stones, writing only on musked reversible paper, and married to an actress of the Opéra, named Rosalie, by whom he had two children." (De Pradt, *De la Belgique depuis 1789 jusqu'à 1794*, p. 57).

The legend of Mercy's marriage with Rosalie, we know, has been denied with proofs in hand by M. Welvert, whose fine study we have quoted several times.

The disappearance of his precious wine was probably a severe blow for the elderly diplomat. But two years later another misfortune, more personal, would have befallen him had he survived to suffer it—November 16, 1794, he was put upon the list of *émigrés* by the Directory of the Department of the Seine-et-Oise; then the furniture of his château—part of which belonged to Rosalie Levasseur—was seized and put on sale (December 15th). But the inscription on the fatal list, the seizure and sale, could not affect one who was but a shade. In truth, at the very time when the Directory of the Seine-et-Oise was occupied with his case, Mercy-Argenteau was dead. . . . Charged with a mission to England, he had embarked on the 13th of August, and thirteen days later, on the 26th, he died. His will was dated the 24th of March of the same year; one learns from it that he had placed a considerable sum with the Bank of England in favor of his mistress.

As for her, she was to lead for thirty years the most wandering life imaginable. After June 20th, 1792, when the flight of the Royal family and its return to Paris presaged events still more terrible, she had applied for and obtained a passport, dated July 2, in order to go to Valenciennes, her native town. One finds her still in Valenciennes during the bombardment of that place, which ended July 27, 1793. After the death of Mercy she migrated a second time, making a trip to Vienna, probably in order to defend her interests. She was driven out of the Austrian capital and lived at Paderborn and Neuwied successively. Placed on the list of *émigrés* (September 8, 1796) the amnesty of the 23d of August, 1801, found her in the latter town, to which she was to return many years later to die. Meanwhile, Mercy's estates at Chennevières had been sold (June 21, 1798) before being definitely confiscated by the State (September 26, 1805). During this time the former companion of the Ambassador had filed a succession of claims, most of which had the object of getting her name struck off the list of *émigrés*. The 1st of February, 1805, she induced her compatriot, the deputy d'Etourmel, to recommend that she be given the benefit of the amnesty (of Nov. 6, 1801). In this recommendation she did not fear to have it stated that she had been secretly married to Count Mercy-Argenteau and had had a son by him. The act of erasure was completed the 27th of March, 1805; but she had still to continue the struggle to recover her confiscated property. Finally, in April, 1808, she obtained 2,324 francs only of arrearages in rents from her former estate of Chennevières.



Rose Joséphe Levasseur had then been married for two years (since September 17, 1806) to a former military man, André Maxime de Fouchier, a widower and divorcé, seventeen years older than she. The certificate nowhere indicates that there had been a secret marriage between the former singer and Mercy-Argenteau. On the contrary, this document warrants us in destroying a persistent legend and so clearing up this little point in the history of the relations of the diplomatic world with the Opéra.

Having retired to Pecq (near Saint-Germain-en-Laye) after her marriage, she decided (in 1810) to "adopt" her son. The legal act in which she recognizes him implicitly as her son, calls him "Chevalier de Noville" and gives Coblenz as his place of residence. Born at Paris on the 14th of September, 1783, as has been said, the Chevalier de Noville died at Nice in 1823.

His mother survived him three years, and it was to Neuwied on the Rhine where she had sojourned at least three times after the Revolution, that she finally returned to die, May 6th, 1826, at the age of seventy-seven.

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Thus ended, after the troubled days of the Revolution and the Empire, the life of her whose lyric career, so obscure in its beginnings, illumined for a short ten years the stage of the Royal Academy of Music, realizing for her contemporaries in unforgettable performances of which only the fame has survived, the great heroines of Gluck.

(Translated by Julia Gregory).

## PROBLEMS OF MUSICAL CRITICISM

By SOPHIE P. GIBLING

**I**S a science of musical criticism possible? If it be, what are its laws and functions? What is the intellectual attitude in which critical judgments should be made? Is the test of art in general to be equally the test of music in particular?

These are questions of which the workmen in a craft the possibility of whose existence has still to be proven have been quietly unconscious. And yet the social demand for it has been so great that a fairly definite musical criticism has developed in the last half century in spite of the vagueness of its upbringing. Surely we, and it, are now ready for its more rational development. A canon of principles is perhaps as important to musical criticism as a system of logic is to metaphysics; without them it must be as formlessly fantastic as philosophy was before Aristotle.

The modern critic, writing in the papers about yesterday's performance of a new symphony, is likely to give an impression of an exaggerated boredom, as if he had entered the concert hall late, and left it early. The two main types of praise he can bestow on a work are that it was "interesting"; and that it was well applauded by the audience. Search through criticism after criticism and you will find remarkably few times the womanish comment that a thing was "beautiful." The modern critic is apparently not looking for beauty. In fact, he seems almost impervious to it. Doubtless this tendency is a result of his conscious reaction from the sentimental description and the subjective interpretation of musical works which were in vogue before music was considered worthy of intellectual attention.

Whatever be the cause of the dryness and monotony of the modern musical criticism, and of its clinging to the formal and technical side, it remains true that we close volume after volume of it with a growing sense of incompleteness. That subtle quality which we still tritely call the "spirit" or the "atmosphere" of a master's work is painfully lacking in the very books which should strive most consciously to retain, explain, and define it. These volumes seem empty of the essence and substance of the music, from Spitta's Bach to the latest work on Debussy. When Strauss puzzles me and I go with my great "why?" hopefully to the most

recommended books, I find therein some pictures of Strauss; a biography of the man that is no more satisfying as a psychological interpretation of him than a picture of his skeleton would be; a few chapters relating chronologically the appearance and reception of his various works; and a conclusion on the probable future of music in general. Such a book is a criticism of neither Strauss nor his music. It is no criticism at all. One continues to read it, after the first disappointment, for the sake of the facts it records, and for the sake of getting the author's underlying aesthetic theory, which usually crops out, unconsciously or not, in any book of criticism.

As the runner reads, he is forced to believe either that the critics are failing to accomplish their aim as critics, or that they have no aim at all. Do they mean to judge or to interpret? Or to restate in words what has been given us in tones? Or perhaps simply to analyze? If the last, is the analysis to be formal, technical, or substantial?

But these, too, are problems of function and method that have not yet been consciously faced by the critics. Their work, because it is blind, because it is neither scientific nor philosophical, judicial nor interpretative, subjective nor objective—and yet a little of all of these—is primitive and crude. Music is the youngest of the arts; and this is perhaps why musical criticism is behind all other criticism in development, and in consistency of purpose and logic of method.

But the primitive and the crude usually have one splendid quality—the quality of sincerity. Our criticism does not excel in that virtue. It is formal, often merely verbal, and peculiarly superficial. One wonders sometimes if its superficiality is not perhaps necessary—because music lies too deep to be caught and held with the surface-hooks of words. Passions, emotions, spiritual attitudes, when analyzed, criticized, psychologized, evanesce; and it may be that music is simply the essence, the substance of these.

For whatever music be (and I have not yet found either scientist or philosopher, from Helmholtz to Santayana, who has vitally touched the question of what the being of music really consists in) it has no real connection with sound. It is a merely incidental fact that music comes to us through that particular medium. Music is not the sound itself. It is behind the sound. And in that sense, it is neither physical nor real, but ideational, ideal. If this be true, music consists of ideas which, if the composer speaks in a tone idiom comprehensible to his hearers, are transmissible. Each interval, every combination of tones, as Bach

well knew three centuries ago, has its own particular significance as an idea. When a new kind of soul that has never been before, begins to express itself in tones and needs a new idiom in which to speak, when a Scriabine or a Schönberg speaks in what at first seems an unintelligible tongue—we, and the critics, if we have faith enough to listen without impatience, must wait until we, too, can understand that new idiom and that new language, else we shall not hear the music for the sound. To get the music, we must be able to forget the sound.

This invention of new musical languages as mediums for the expression of new individual or new race ideas is an added difficulty for the critics. When they attempt to write books about music of whose sense they have not yet had time to grasp the rudimentary grammar, how can we hope to get from them a judgment concerning whether that music is true and beautiful, or false and ugly?

In putting this question as I do, I am aware of the two implications I am making—first, that the poet is right in proclaiming identical the true and the good. I do this because I assume as acceptable the definition which Professor Rogers ascribes to Plotinus—that “beauty is the shining through of the spiritual reality in the material forms whose truth this reality constitutes.”

My second implication is one concerning which not all the critics agree. It is the assumption that beauty is in some way related to art as an aim. Many of the new painters and sculptors have cast aside beauty as an essential in art. And some of our musical critics record a similar tendency among the composers.

The need for agreement among the artists and the critics on one side or the other of this point is obvious. Unless we have at least that much of a basis upon which to form criticism, we can not hope that criticism can become either scientific or anything but arbitrary and personal. A completer musical aesthetic will of course co-evolve with criticism as that develops. But surely the direction at least of an art, if not the standards, must be agreed on before criticism can hope to deal in a universal way with musical problems.

Edward Hanslick and Professor Bain, and one or two others, have realized this need and striven to answer it. But their positions as formalists in aesthetics render their answers unacceptable to those whose faith in a meaning in music is profound and religious. Busoni, in his delightful and stimulating new “Aesthetic of Music,” suggests many problems which the musical critics badly need to

have solved; but just at the crucial point of his discussion he realizes the overwhelming difficulty of a definition of the Absolute Music (*Urmusik*) which he has set up as an aim, and leaves the open question before us, waiting expectant as at the threshold of a room we are not permitted to enter.

Perhaps the most notable piece of musical criticism in our generation is Romain Rolland's great novel, "*Jean-Christophe*." The unusual form in which the criticism is presented makes it possible for the author to assume a complete basis of musical aesthetics and thus avoid, by ignoring, that first big stumbling block of the critics. Jean-Christophe's fine, fierce analysis of the spirit of his times, and of the men who express it in music, seems, more than the work of any others of our great critics, to touch the essence, the reality, the inner being, of music itself. That being of music which we had been able to understand only wordlessly, and which we had so striven and hoped to find interpreted and explained by the critics, Jean-Christophe here illumines with the flashing flood of his spirit, subjectively. It is through its effect upon him, as his own genius responds to it, it is through the analysis of a personal reflex, that we have this keen, vigorous, and solid criticism.

If, then, the best musical criticism consists in a criticism of music as it makes its impression upon individuals; if what music is consists in what it does; if the basis for musical criticism is subjective, individual, and personal, then such a criticism requires a method which differs radically from the methods in all other criticism. The systems and laws of literary criticism will not hold here. Horace, Philip Sidney, Dryden and Poe can stimulate the crystallization of method in musical criticism merely by suggesting, not by solving, some of its problems. That long controversy in which the literary learned wrote so many volumes at one another concerning the right of criticism to be judicial, cannot force its conclusions upon the critics of music.

We should have a volume on the Principles of Musical Criticism which should

1. Establish a foundation of musical aesthetics on which to base our criticism.
2. Proclaim a standard so universal in its terms that all music can be measured by it.
3. State the function and the method of criticism itself, with its relation to the reader and to the composer.
4. Distinguish among the different types of criticism. They are at present so inextricably and madly mixed that the newspaper

criticism and the scholarly jostle one another in painful combination. The newspaper review, the appreciation, the analysis, and the scholarly volume of real criticism differ not only in function, but in style and method, and the musical critic should be just as intelligently conscious of this as the literary critic.

Our critics have done bravely so far to sail onto the open sea without chart or compass. But surely if they better understood their craft, and we better knew what we had a right to expect from them, we should have a far more stable and permanently valuable criticism. We should miss, it is true, the delight of a hot Schumann exploding his personal animosities in print, and young Bernard Shaw holding forth on Wagner's economic theories. We know, from Wagner's own hand, that he never had any; and yet Shaw writes cheerfully of Wagner's purpose in presenting, in the "Ring," "our capitalistic industrial system from the socialist's point of view in the slavery of the Nibelungs and the tyranny of Alberic.—All this . . . was as clear to Wagner as it is to us."

Lacking these pleasant grotesques of criticism, we shall have, on the other hand, a criticism which is scientific, inspirational, and creative. The composer needs the help of the critic to understand his own work; for creative genius is seldom psychologically introspective. On the other side, the concert public, frankly acknowledging the insufficiency of its musical judgment, depends heavily upon the critics not only for their judgment of musical values, but for their presentation of the right musical attitude. The public is intensely curious concerning how music should be listened to. Except to the few who can absorb its meaning purely intuitively, listening must be an art requiring a fine skill. And it is to the musical critics that we look for the expounding of the difficult technic of artistic listening.







Igor Stravinsky

## IMPRESSIONS OF IGOR STRAWINSKY

By C. STANLEY WISE

A little man, with a face rather long and melancholy in appearance; who is usually to be seen garbed in grey, thus conveying a general impression of greyness if not of insignificance to anyone not sufficiently observant of the formation of his head;—such is Strawinsky, whom many critics consider to be the most powerful and representative of the Russian composers of our day. (Now that Scriabin is dead, it is indeed difficult to name anyone who could compete with him for that position.) It is to the very simplicity and directness of the man that we owe rather frequent misconception of his character and to a certain extent of his music. Here in this little Swiss town of Montreux where he passed many of his days since he emerged from the state of pupildom, and in whose peaceful precincts nearly all of his not very numerous published works of importance were written:—a holiday place redolent and by no means unmindful of the names of those artistic and literary celebrities of the past who made it their temporary residence, and also from time to time brimful and running over with the chronicled achievements of various would-be celebrities of the present day;—here Strawinsky went on his quiet way practically ignored and unknown.

Since the young composer's aim in settling here was to find quiet for his work as well as a good and invigorating climate, this somewhat amusing state of affairs must have suited him well, although, were he less single-minded, it would surely have caused his face to wrinkle into the gently-ironic smile that one learns to expect and loves to draw forth when in conversation with him.

I am not at all concerned with the question as to whether, as has been said, my friend's music is or is not typically "Russian," or if it is of the very essence of "Cosmopolitanism" or if it possesses "all the defects of the train-de-luxe Ritz-Carlton atmosphere in which he has passed so much of his time" but in so far as such criticism would imply that Strawinsky himself possesses the social habits or tastes of a Wagner, Weber, Mendelssohn, Rossini and Richard Strauss combined, that he is only in his true element when he finds himself in a well-fitting suit before a table

supplied by a good *chef*, and surrounded by social flatterers, it is so wide of the mark as to be absolutely farcical.

His very simplicity of mind and singleness of aim naturally cause him to feel quite at home wheresoever and in whatsoever company he may find himself. He can face an infuriated audience in Paris or a heavy social dinner in London with equal calm; nor is he moved to any abnormal extent when he has to appear on a platform before serried ranks of wild enthusiasts. Thus a critic such as Mr. Toye, who has probably never met the musician except amid the environment of gleaming shirt-fronts and twinkling glasses, may be excused for imagining the *hôtel-de-luxe* to provide the atmosphere most congenial to him, but I think that he cannot be pardoned for building artistic criticism upon such a foundation of ignorance.

Strawinsky's whole soul is wrapped up in his music, and apart from his work (which, by the way, he treats entirely practically, as did Bach, Mozart, Beethoven and others of the great composers, even Wagner himself to a considerable extent,) he is purely and singularly domestic in his tastes and habits. In this respect as in many others his character has always seemed to me to bear a considerable resemblance to that of the first composer above mentioned,—old John Sebastian Bach with his marvellous grasp of counterpoint and delight in setting himself to solve musical puzzles, his never-ceasing experiments in harmony, his domesticity and personal simplicity.

The latter quality it was that first attracted me to the man, for he had already begun to make some mark in the musical world when I became acquainted with him, and in the course of a fairly long life I have come across a good many "geniuses" whose attitude towards life and their surroundings was so unlike his. They have almost always talked largely and at great length about their "Art." And usually even more huge than the capital "A" in that word the big "I" has loomed in their speech!

As for Strawinsky, unless one is intelligently interested and enquires about his work, it is possible to pass hours with him and know nothing of what he is doing. While always eager to discuss music, having no false shame about his own achievement and being able to give reasons for the faith that is in him, he never obtrudes his own personality or boasts of his successes, and still less does he ever attempt to depreciate the work of others, whether he may be in thorough sympathy with their methods or not.

I have already alluded to his practical attitude towards musical composition. This is well brought out by the fact to

which Mr. Francis Toye in a recent article in the *Musical Quarterly* aptly drew attention:—that he alone among living composers writes generally with a view to performance by a definite body of artists. It should be noticed, however, that in his compositions he holds himself free to express just what he wishes to say,—or I would rather put it that he writes whatever he feels to be of the essence of his subject,—leaving to his interpreters the task of conveying his meaning to the hearers. I remarked especially that feature of his artistic production three years ago when he was busy with the composition of *Le Sacre du Printemps*.

Looking through the first sketch of the great solo dance in the second act, where the rhythm varies continually, the bars being marked  $\frac{3}{8}$ ,  $\frac{2}{4}$ ,  $\frac{3}{4}$ ,  $\frac{4}{4}$ ,  $\frac{5}{4}$ ,  $\frac{6}{8}$ ,  $\frac{7}{8}$ , and so on, in an order that at first strikes one as purely fortuitous, I was impressed by the great difficulties presented therein for dancer and conductor. I could not resist asking him, therefore, whether during its composition he had consulted Nijinsky or his *première danseuse*, with regard to its effective execution.

His reply was most decided and something to this effect:—“Surely not! A musician must write in accordance with his own ideas. It would be impossible for two persons to compose a work.” Some weeks later he hastened to tell me that he was “just back from the first rehearsals of the ‘*Sacre*,’” and he must say that “the dance that had been evolved was the most perfectly beautiful” that he had ever seen.

In fairness I ought to add that some who saw the ballet produced in Paris two or three months later compared that dance to Swedish gymnastics! I am not here concerned with criticism of the art either of Strawinsky or of members of the Russian Ballet, I but emphasize this point as it helps to illustrate the composer’s attitude toward his art.

Strawinsky lives very quietly in the villa that he has rented at Morges, usually spending a part of the summer in some Swiss mountain resort, and when the health of his family renders change of air judicious, he always accompanies them, difficult as he must sometimes find it to carry on steady work under the conditions prevalent, for instance, in a small mountain hotel. It is only lately that he has taken up his residence at Morges, near Lausanne; where, by the way, Paderewski has resided for many years. Before then he lived at Clarens.

The Russian composer’s amusements are few and simple. He is sound enough at heart to enjoy indulging in a certain

amount of winter sport in the season, and he even retains a thorough boy's love for sweetmeats.

Much in the way of description of Strawinsky's music would be a difficult task to undertake,—to criticise it an impossibility, at all events for a musician of an older generation. The idioms of music, even more than of other arts, change very quickly, and attempted criticism by able men and earnest students of the work of contemporary composers in former days has usually resulted in such appalling examples of lack of insight that I should prefer to leave modern compositions to be judged by results even if I felt myself competent to essay their appraisal.

His early symphony, played at Montreux in 1914 for the first time in public, affords but few instances of unusual harmonic combinations, although it was completed not so very many years ago; the true Strawinsky first appears in his popular ballet *L'Oiseau de Feu*. In this one already finds those subtle rhythms and original touches of orchestration that one now expects from the composer; also, and perhaps above all, that conciseness of utterance—that ruthless suppression of each redundant bar in which he goes even beyond any of his fellow countrymen.

In *Petrouchka*—perhaps his most beautiful work up to the present time—the harmonic combinations are more audacious, but the music, when it receives an orchestral rendering as perfect as it should, sounds in no way harsh, although its effects are remarkably strange to ears accustomed only to nineteenth century music.

The same cannot be said of *Le Sacre du Printemps*, his most incomprehensible work. Getting to know it fairly well during its time of composition I was not at all amazed to hear that upon its production in Paris in 1913 it roused the audience to positive fury.

More surprising was the fact that a year later, when played symphonically without ballet or scenery under M. Pierre Monteux's sympathetic direction, it was received in the same city with an enthusiasm at least equal to the aversion with which the music had previously been heard. The subject of this ballet seems to me distinctly too vast for musical illustration, or if not so, it is at all events beyond the easy comprehension of any audience, even of trained musicians. It deals, one may say, with the pulsing of the primeval world under the influence of spring, while at the same time a simple story of savage religious rites unfolds itself, and the wild weird music cannot be ignored by any hearer: it must excite either to deep enjoyment or to positive aversion.



The orchestration in this work is marvellous. I regret that it is impossible to give illustrations of it here. All present-day composers seem to be masters of orchestral colour if of nothing else, but to my mind Strawinsky easily surpasses them all, the effects he produces being often highly original and almost invariably effective.

Although in most of his works he employs a very large orchestra and the harmonies are sometimes so strange as to be repellent, the mass of sound is always sonorous and never blatant.

In some of his works, notably in *Petrouchka*, very striking combinations of tone colour are obtained by the employment of a pianoforte in the score, and Strawinsky, like the majority of modern writers, composes much at that instrument, but there is nothing pianistic in his orchestral part-writing, although it is possible that a thoughtful student might be led to surmise this practice of his through indications scattered here and there in the scores. For instance in the charming little opera *Le Rossignol* the barbaric Chinese March is written mainly in the keys of five and six sharps,—most evidently selected on account of the facility with which experiments with the pentatonic scale could be carried out on the black keys of the pianoforte. As to his passion for harmonic experiment, I shall never forget the eagerness with which he hurried me to the pianoforte one day to exhibit the capabilities that he had just discovered in that Chinese pentatonic scale.

I have called *The Nightingale* an opera, and it is so named on the programmes of its performance for lack of a better description, but by the composer it is entitled a "Lyric Tale." It is to my mind a most exquisite little composition, and I was fortunately able to witness its production in London the year before last. It follows very closely the lines of Hans Andersen's delightful tale, and musically it seems to me to illustrate the story to perfection, and also to show us Strawinsky's art at its best though not at its deepest, for naturally the composer has not employed his most intricate contrapuntal devices to adorn such a simple plot. If it has a fault it is that of over-compression. I think that the action, slight as it is, might well be allowed more time to unfold itself. It is here that Strawinsky's ruthless excision of all that can be deemed redundant fully shows itself, and the effect is rather brusque. Unfortunately at Drury Lane the work suffered much from imperfect staging and insufficient rehearsal; not so much musically, for its direction by M. Emile Cooper and rendering by the orchestra were superb.

It conveyed even to me who knew its music so well the impression of a music drama whose action was compressed in places to such an extent as to be almost unintelligible, and I was not surprised to read criticism of it as "potted opera." Not until I had the chance to examine the printed score did I realize in how many cases the explicit directions of the composer had been ignored in performance.

Each act should last about twelve minutes; at Drury Lane the intervals between the acts extended each of them to about twenty minutes. The composer has indicated in the score no such intervals whatever, and if it was found needful to drop the curtain for a few seconds the breaks should have been made as short as possible. Then a considerable portion of the second act is directed to be played behind a gauze curtain, so that the scenic impression may be to a certain extent that of moving tableaux;—at the production in London the picturesque Chinese courtiers bustled about and posed like an Italian opera chorus. The singer, too, who took the part of the Nightingale faced the audience and bowed her acknowledgements of the applause with which her fine vocalisation was greeted just as appropriately as an average operatic tenor; and the final curtain—enjoined to be lowered very slowly—came down with a run, so that the fisherman sang his philosophical epilogue while the puzzled audience wondered whether the opera was finished or not!

With such inept stage-management it is amazing that the work created any favorable impression at all. Most of these defects that I have noted were probably due to the attempt made to produce too large a number of new works during a short season, and before *The Nightingale* is given during another season they will, I hope, have been remedied, in which case I shall indeed be surprised if its reception is not an enthusiastic one.

The Chinese March already mentioned illustrates fairly and simply Strawinsky's attitude not only towards unusual harmonic but also towards rhythmic combinations. Russians, like the majority of Eastern races possess almost invariably a fine feeling for rhythm, and no composer handles and superposes unusual and intricate rhythms with greater freedom, ease and sureness of touch than the subject of this article.

*Le Sacre du Printemps* is worthy of close study if for that reason alone. Indeed the early symphony to which I have already referred is perhaps more original and interesting in this respect than it is harmonically.

The song of the true "Nightingale" in the second act of the Lyric Tale is a fine instance of the composer's melodic conception. On paper it seems complicated and distinctly vague in tonality, but in performance it is exquisite, and has a peculiar wild charm of its own.

Indeed, *The Nightingale* is throughout most interesting, and especially so because it marks the advance made by the composer in the course of a few years. The first act has not been much altered since it was completed about six years ago, and while there is perfect unity throughout the composition the music of the other acts is unquestionably riper, the harmonic and orchestral effects are more assured than in the earlier portion of the work.

There is one feature in Strawinsky's treatment of the orchestra that I must emphasize more strongly, because it runs counter to an idea rather prevalent among those who have not heard much of his music. They read statements such as that the Russian composer "begins where Richard Strauss leaves off," and knowing that he employs a very large orchestra they are naturally led to believe that his principal aim is to produce a great mass of sound.

Nothing is further from the truth. Strawinsky obtains many of his most wonderful effects by means that are really strikingly simple, however complicated they may be in appearance in the score.

There is a short passage in one of three Japanese songs published in 1912, descriptive of bud-sheaths bursting under the influence of April's breath, and the instruments employed to accompany the voice are piccolo, flute, clarinet and strings (with a note or two upon the pianoforte, *una corda*). Hardly ever are more than three instruments employed at one time, but those few bars are marvellous in the impression that they make upon the hearers.

Strawinsky's creative energy was temporarily checked, like that of most musicians, by the outbreak of the war, but he soon recommenced steady work. Besides various small compositions he has been engaged upon two of considerable dimensions and of rather unusual character. One of these is laid out for voices and instruments treated for the most part independently, somewhat after the style of chamber music, and it unfolds the tale of a "Village Wedding," the words being drawn from traditional love-poems gathered far and wide throughout Russia.

I await its production with considerable interest, for the composer's art has to my mind hitherto seemed to possess one defect,

—if it be a defect—an entire absence of anything approaching sentimentality, and one cannot imagine a pure love-story treated really well without some amount of tender sentiment.

Since Strawinsky strikes me as (above everything else) sincere in all that he does, I am curious to find out whether my impression of his attitude to the prevalent theme of nearly every opera that has been written is correct, and in that case whether he may not after a time have discovered that his unemotional temperament hampered him in this work, which was nearly completed at the time of writing this article (1915), and may be called a ballet-cantata.

The other important composition, to which he was giving much thought during this winter of 1915-1916, is of a religious character (*Liturgie*), but is not yet sufficiently advanced to be here described.

## TWO SUMMERS WITH THE BLACKFEET INDIANS OF MONTANA

By ARTHUR NEVIN

**A**T seven o'clock in the evening, under a pouring rain, my train reached Browning Station, Montana. About three miles to the north could be seen the dozen or so shacks of Browning proper, where the Indian agency and trading posts are located. When the train left the station (which was but a small frame shed) and I hurriedly threw my luggage into the old-fashioned stage coach, and then jumped into this "prairie rocker," my enthusiasm lagged a bit, for the rain was falling heavily and a mist was beginning to settle which soon took from view the distant agency of Browning, leaving our coach floundering over the undulating prairie, deeper into the dusky mist which seemed to blot us out from all civilization.

Drenched by the time I reached the little hotel at the agency, I at once went to my room, unpacked my bag and found dry clothing. I had taken my dinner on the train, knowing it would be my last good meal for a long time to come. So I had little to do after arranging my blankets and few clothing effects for my life with the Indians, and at ten o'clock I was sleeping soundly on a corn-husk mattress.

The following morning a little time was taken over the dickering for a broncho, saddle and bridle. This accomplished, I was on my way to the Indian camp some thirty miles distant. The ride over the swells of the prairie, looking north and south as far as the eye could reach, with the snow-capped Rocky Mountains ever before me, was full of charm. The stillness of the great, open stretch of land thrilled me; the prairie grass waved about my broncho's feet with an abundance of many-colored little wild flowers peeping out here and there; a soft breeze blew white puff-like clouds over a marvelously blue sky in an atmosphere so rare that distance became a matter of confused speculation.

I must have been over a mile from the encampment when there came floating on this soft breeze over the prairie grass and flowers and beneath the beautiful, blue heavens, the first faint murmur of Indian drums. Stopping my pony, I listened for a moment; then overcome by impatience to be in the picture which my imagination was drawing, I urged my broncho into a hard gallop,

when suddenly the animal made an awkward lunge forward, falling upon his knees; he quickly recovered however, and with ears thrown forward, watched carefully the ground, for we were among gopher hills and to leap on the burrowings would mean a stumble or fall to a running horse.

I came to a stream, the Cut Bank River, which tosses down from the Rocky Mountains. Its rushing waters have cut its bed fifty feet or more below the level of the prairie, and along its banks, growing in plenty, are stately cottonwood trees and scented balsam poplars with a mat of intertwining willows at their feet.

There are but a few places where it is possible to ford this river, and the approaches to these few are usually rather precarious. The descent from the prairie to the water is at a degree verging upon the perpendicular, on the banks of crumbling, grayish clay and sand. The best way to reach the river is to give your broncho free rein and you will have a delightful slide, the pony on his haunches guiding with his fore feet, until he is close to the water's edge, when he makes a bound into the stream.

Ascending to the prairie (the pony jumping upwards at right angles), the Indian camp could be seen, half a mile up the river. It was but a short gallop, and soon my broncho began neighing to the enormous herd of Indian ponies grazing near the camp, some of whom were cordial enough to return the greeting.

Reaching a prominent knoll of the prairie, a marvelous view of the entire tented village burst upon me. There, before me, were a hundred and fifty wigwams—called *lodges* by the Indians—pitched in an oval shape, the inner line forming a perfect ellipse, while the outer lodges were scattered indiscriminately.

The white material from which these lodges are made is decorated by crude drawings, representing different animals, such as the deer, the snake, the buffalo and many others. These decorations, done in reds, blacks and yellows, each signify a society to which the owner of the lodge belongs. There are many societies, each created by some brave who has experienced a dream which came to him during a "long sleep" and through which the animal adorning his lodge became his talisman. These societies are of a religious character.

The village was gay with life. Indians bedecked with their gorgeously beaded buckskin costumes, their striking colored blankets carelessly thrown about them, were singing and dancing, the sun's rays constantly casting sharp, prismatic flashes from the glass beads, and one could think, feel and see nothing but color! color!



The Blackfeet are perhaps the most primitive of any tribe in the States. They hold to the customs and traditions of past generations. Climatic conditions favor the retaining of the painted face. The altitude, from forty-five hundred to five thousand feet, gives the winds passing over the snow mountains a piercing effect, and they attack the face unmercifully. To protect the skin from this element, the Indian uses a red paint, often smearing the entire face. The composition of this paint is very simple. At the base of the Rocky Mountains is found a pasty clay. This clay is red, blue, yellow and black, and by mixing it with bacon grease they have a primitive cold cream substitute.

The continuance of the pristine costume is accounted for by the fluctuating temperature. With the sun shining there is delightful warmth, but a cloud overshadowing will quickly chill the air. So the blanket is always kept in readiness. Clouds seem to be born on the ridge of the Rockies. Frequently up into a perfect blue sky will suddenly glide beautiful, large, white puffs which spread and amalgamate, float eastward, eclipse the sun and drive a poor relation of Jack Frost over the earth.

My first twenty-four hours in this camp were of indolence. When I entered their village I was not cognizant of being noticed in any way, so indifferent seemed these people and such was the lack of curiosity shown as to my presence among them. But their strategy was wonderfully clever, for I learned later that my every movement was watched.

And so I lolled about, in and out of my wigwam, speaking to no one and no one speaking to me, though many braves passed me, ignoring me with all the grace of indifference.

Primarily my visit to this reservation was to study and take notes of their music. To succeed in this I could not afford to take the aggressive for fear of committing some breach of etiquette, and thereby placing myself in bad repute with a people whose ways and customs were completely foreign to me.

During the solitary hours I heard, from distant wigwams, the Indians, singing. It filled me with enthusiasm and thrilled me with the possibilities I felt to be latent in their music. I listened with the greatest interest and tried to familiarize myself with the barbaric chants. I would become provoked when mentally notating a tune, to find the song taking an interval most puzzling. To probe the tremulous tones of a guttural and nasal vocalization was sufficient difficulty for me to master first and I paid considerable attention to this perplexity. From five o'clock in the afternoon on into the late night one can find ample opportunity to hear

the Indian music. They love to sing, and song to them is the most potent outlet of their emotions.

As evening came and darkness followed I looked upon a long stretch of wigwams, with grotesque shadows thrown by the fires within. Silhouettes of crouching Indians in a circle, some swaying to and fro with the pulsation of a song, until one, enticed by the singing, would rise and dance with nervous, savage, stilted steps, the body rigid with every movement; drums and rattles beating in syncopation that suggested adverse rhythm to that being sung. And lying flat upon the earth, my chin resting on my folded arms, I watched. My gaze would wander upwards over the wigwams into the great heavens, and never before did the stars look so large and so close to me. Then beyond—the vast stretch of prairie, rolling, rolling, rolling on into the glorious distance where the sky droops down and joins the earth at that intangible line called Horizon.

Like a shadow a blanketed figure glided by me, with noiseless, moccasin tread, carrying with it a rare perfume of burnt sweet grass, then disappeared like a phantom through the maze of wigwams. And over all a mild prairie breeze stirring. On into the night I lay there and watched, thrilled with an ominous transport of feelings. And all the while I was being watched!

When the village had quieted, there came from the distance a sound like faint, dismal moaning that would swell into a wail, then decrease but ever augmenting in volume. The sound came nearer and nearer me, seemingly hugging close the undulating ground, rising and falling with the swells and depressions of the prairie, until at last I knew it was the howl of a pack of coyotes. As out of the night this malign wail made advent, so into the night did it vanish, and quiet reigned, while the stars, growing larger, stole closer to the earth.

For several days I rode aimlessly over the prairie. Eventually a day came which offered an opportunity to attempt writing down some Indian melodies. It was a most difficult and discouraging experiment, and at the conclusion of this first trial my notebook was an enigma to me. A few disconnected bars of several tunes!

Lying in my lodge afterwards, I schemed and tried to find some means which would enable me to grasp this music, but after much experimenting I found the only way was to memorize as much as possible, jot it down when alone as best my memory would aid me, then be ever ready with my little book, upon hearing again the melodies, to fill in the gaps.

Becoming more familiar with their music, I realized why I had such difficulty in following the tones of their songs. Through the deep, guttural slurrings, they sang quarter tones! I did not allow my distress at this startling discovery to root itself deeply at the time, my interest and enthusiasm leading me to believe I could overcome this unusual step by substituting half tones and not lose the original effect.

The greatest difficulty was to search through the quavering pulsations of tones—impossible to expound—and reach the kernel of the theme. The appoggiaturas and glissandos, coated by a throaty tremolo, made the objective point one for perseverance and fatiguing patience to attain. Even then the satisfaction so found was never complete, for the truth eventually asserted itself that the fascination of their rugged, pagan music was the prodigious power of the reiterated use of the quarter tone.

I heard many hundreds of songs, dirges and ceremonial hymns; to write them as they are originally sung is an impossibility. The weird charm of their music is lost in the white man's interpretation through his inability to reproduce their subtle tone compass. Our scales are inadequate and there is no hope for the *exact* preserving of this aboriginal music after the red man has passed away.

The dirges sung by the Indians, during religious ceremonial rites, are of a monotonous and uninteresting style. I recall one experience of listening from eight o'clock in the morning until after five in the afternoon, to a sacred service performed over the "Beaver Bundle," where one dirge followed another until two hundred were sung. I listened and hoped for some new melodic theme—but to no avail. The closing action of this service was the blessing of the people by the medicine man, Bull Plume. This was done by smearing a solid circle of red paint upon the forehead, then streaking a line down the nose and ending with another circle upon the chin, accompanying by a low, wailing chant.

I was called by Bull Plume to kneel before him. Doing so, he painted me and blessed me with a prayer that I might live among his people in all safety, and when the time came for me to depart, might reach home, "whence came the rising sun," in good health and have "good luck."

In great contrast to the monotony of the dirge, is the melodic value the Indian has in his love songs, night songs, wolf songs and traveling songs. In constructing this music he is ruled by the interval of the fourth. No matter what style the tune, the objective point is the fourth. He takes many ways to reach it,

but after becoming familiarized with the style, one learns to anticipate this interval as a resolution to any given phrase. The closing note of all their music is upon the dominant, on which tone all authentic Indian music ends. Some southern tribes occasionally close their melodies with the tonic, but to my firm belief this closing is due to Spanish influence.

So primitive are the Blackfeet that music of even a two-part harmony is a most distressing cacophony to them. I have seen their puzzled facial expression upon hearing one of their most popular songs reproduced (by a phonograph) with harmonies, and they could not understand why "a few of the people sang so poorly"!

A most remarkable revelation it was to me when I heard many voices in unison singing in perfect accord, the appoggiaturas gracing quarter, half and whole tones with greatest ease.

And next to this wonder came the ability of Bull Plume (during the ceremony above referred to), to sing from eight A.M. until five P.M., with only one hour's intermission for lunch, without losing his voice completely, as his vocal output came deep from the throat with every suggestion of his vocal cords becoming frayed, ripped and torn to pieces.

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As the days came and went, I became known to these people by the Indian name Kutianaantsi, the literal translation being Never-Tie-His-Moccasin-Strings. This name was not given me by reason of an implied neglect, but because I resembled a departed brave of this name. I was no longer a stranger to whom the stoic side of the red-man was shown. The apathy I encountered during my first few days was put aside and I found these people filled with humor and sensible to all kinds of emotions. They taunted each other good naturedly at their games; story telling was an important factor during the evenings when parties clustered around a wigwam fire, while the air was deliciously scented by dried bits of sweet grass thrown to the flames. I do not mean to say there were not moments of silence. There were, and out of these moments would emanate a faint, murmuring tone from some individual. Gradually this tone would increase and be taken up by others, until the volume was deemed sufficient to introduce a theme, which was the signal for the drums to come in with their syncopated beat. On, on the singing would grow, and presently a squaw would rise and dance, elevating herself on

the toes, then stamping the earth with her heels. She would soon be joined by another squaw, going through the same movement. The music, becoming more and more agitated and crescendoing with added accompaniment of the rattles, would incite a brave to his feet, his knees bent forward with a rigid tightening of the muscles, while his body, more flexible, would sway up and down to a savage cry that punctuated the steps of his dance. Other braves would arise, dancing in different attitudes but with legs ever in strained tension. Around and about the squaws they would hop and glide, the music now heaving in frantic weirdness. The guttural cries turned to whoops and my heart thumped, the blood leaping through my veins with excitement, when suddenly a war cry pierced the air, sounding the end of the dance.

It was glorious to awaken the next morning, just as the sun—the size of a cart-wheel—peeped up over the prairie; have breakfast of bacon, then mount a broncho and dash out into the vast, open stretch which seemed to call you like some enticing spectre. On through the waving grass and over the many-colored wild flowers, seeking strayed cattle or rounding up vagrant horses, inhaling the crisp, invigorating morning air,—a labor of delight. To live in the saddle the greater part of the day, roving over the land where buffaloes swarmed by the thousands in days gone by, their bleached skulls scattered around and about the wallows they so dearly loved, was a routine of the greatest interest.

Returning at twilight to the camp, I would saunter with several Indians to a knoll just on the outskirts of the village, where we would throw ourselves upon the ground, and I would look upon the scene of these nomadic people below me, my companions singing their love songs, night and wolf songs, until the stars began to glow and grow and come close to mother earth.

And so the days and nights went by, and I managed to jot down many melodious tunes; but never can these songs be heard as they sound out on the solemn prairie with only the accompaniment of the soft breeze, and the indefinable something that hangs heavy in that atmosphere, so potent, so full of color and yet so hopelessly intangible.

A morning came when I was awakened, before the sun rolled up on the horizon, by great confusion in the camp. I crawled to the opening of my wigwam and looked out. There, where the night before so many illuminated lodges stood, the "striking" of these shelters was going on. The time it took to "strike" the wigwams, pack them and be ready for the march seemed incredibly short. This work was done entirely by the squaws.

As I peered out, a squaw hurried by, saying something in Indian to me which I could not understand. I crawled back to my blankets, and hastily donned my clothes and I was none too quick, for another squaw was soon at work pulling up the pins of my lodge and it was but a moment before the outer sheeting was hurled off. As I stepped out, an Indian cantered by on his pony, calling out to me, "All go—Sun Dance!"

Then I understood the cause of the great commotion. The Sun Dance was to be held some distance towards the south, and although several days prior to this episode I had gleaned that the march would soon be made, my sudden awakening and the sight of the rapid demolishing of the Indian village allowed no other thought to enter my head.

Excitedly I worked, packing my few belongings, anticipating an entirely new scene of Indian life. Looking up, I saw a covered wagon start south, loose bronchos running by its side and five or six dogs trailing along after it. Wagon after wagon followed until there was quite a line formed.

Wishing to see the start to the best advantage, I mounted my pony and galloped to a knoll from where I could command a splendid view for some distance.

The Indians also use a contrivance called "travois" as a means of transportation, composed of two long saplings which they cross over the pommel of the saddle and there make fast. The heavier ends drag on either side of the broncho. Connecting these ends, behind the pony, are tied two or three cross bars, and upon these the family belongings are made fast, and very often a papoose can be seen bound in with the chattels. This line of wagons and "travois" creeping out over the prairie suggested some huge serpent of mythological enormity.

This caravan of the plains traveled on for some distance, when I saw it stop and soon disperse, breaking up into little groups which scattered in all directions. This dissemination would be for but a day, families selecting different routes to the appointed place for the Sun Dance.

I watched until the knolls of the prairie took from my view the last sign of the tribe, my broncho neighing and pawing and tugging at the reins, impatient at being left behind. Back, where but an hour ago an Indian village stood, but one vestige of life remained—an Indian dog which must have been absent at the time of the departure of his people. He was giving forth a piteous, low howl which grew into a loud, dismal bay as he lifted his head towards the heavens. I realized what a horribly lonesome



land the plains could be, and my impulse was to rush to the dog and quiet him. His voice was piercing a silence that seemed sacred to the spot and I knew not what it might awaken, for over me an ominous chill was running, as though stirred by some passing wraith. Cantering toward the beast, I called him, and he slouched along after me and my pony as we made for the south.

That evening my wigwam was pitched in the willows, close to Cut Bank River which was tinted by the crimson glow of the setting sun. A quarter of a mile farther down the river, the family of Chief White Calf was camped.

The sound of the rushing stream was far enough away to have more of a soothing than a disturbing effect. It so happened that I was to be alone for the night, and I took my broncho upon the prairie and hobbled him, then returned and chopped some wood for my night's fire. It was nine o'clock when I rolled up in my blankets and lay gazing out through the gap in the top of the lodge, at the great, glittering stars.

There is in Montana a species of bird called "the horned lark," which sings its beautiful little rills and trills through the night. On this night there came and perched such a lark on a willow close by. I was awakened from a semi-conscious slumber by the caroling of this merry little songster. The little voice that piped from out of the darkness, vibrated upon my emotions, for I was keen to all the novelties that daily added to my experiences.

My fire was waning, but sufficient flame and glow remained to cast a light which tinted the interior with a soft, roseline hue. With a long, inspired trill the bird departed, chirp following chirp, each one more indistinct as he flew away.

Reaching from my blankets and putting on the dying fire another piece of wood, I turned to sleep again, lulled by the distant song of the river. With my ear close to the ground, I heard a faint sound—more like a slight vibration, so delicate was the attraction. This disturbance became more and more pronounced and sleep was chased away, for soon I realized there was a prowler close by. There came a rustling in the willows which brought me to a sitting posture. Listening intently I could hear a tread coming nearer and nearer. Then there came to me the solution of the situation.

One of the dogs from Chief White Calf's camp, in his nocturnal pillaging, had found the scent of my bacon which I had placed outside in the cool air, and was intent on having it. As bacon is the "staff of life" on the prairies, I was keen to protect it. So I reached for a good-sized stick and crawling to the opening of my

lodge, with right hand ready to throw, my left lifted the flap of the opening—and there, not five feet from me, silhouetted by the light of my small fire, standing at right angles to me with his head turned and two piercing, penetrating little eyes looking right into mine, stood a grizzly bear, the size of a cow!

In this tableau each of us glared into the other's eyes; the bear puzzled and I terrorized. My first instinct was to remain as still as a statue, fearing one move on my part would mean but a short struggle when all would be at an end for me, as I had no weapon of any kind, my little axe lying on the ground just beyond the bear, where I had been chopping. The monster's eyes held to their searching stare, while mine were still set, as fixed when my frightful position was first realized. Seconds dragged into interminable lengths and minutes ran into all the years I had lived. Some little sprite seemed to run through every brain cell of my memory, awakening thoughts seldom aroused from their slumber for I felt hidden beneath the great fear, a certain joy of living, and my mind passed at lightning speed over many things.

I was fearful that the bear at any moment might be inclined to investigate me more thoroughly, when I would have to show I was a living thing by some move for protection, which was left for the inspiration of the moment. I could not tell what the result of such an action would be.

The beast dropped his head with a snarl and began swinging it to and fro, while I expected every sway towards me would impel him in that direction.

The tension I was under bars description; I waited for some definite move to be made by the animal. Shaking his head he seemed to prepare to come at me, then paused and again fixed his staring little eyes upon me.

While straining every nerve to remain quiet and still during these tantalizing moments, the first ray of hope came with the bear's taking a few steps toward an undergrowth of willows between my camp and the river. A few feet he went, then stopped, turned his head and gave me an arrogant look, which filled me anew with fearful dread of his returning. Again the characteristic swing of the head began and then crushing into the willows he went, and I listened to him crashing his way until all was silent but the rippling waters, which sounded more disturbed as the bear made towards them.

Quietly putting the flap of the lodge in its place, I crept to the outer side, crawled out from under the pegged canvas and was off through the darkness at a speed I have never before or since

been capable of making. I was thankful White Calf's camp was not so very far away!

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The Sun Dance is the greatest event of the year to the Indians. It is a ceremony that covers four days and during these days every hour brings forth some episode of the service that is of intense interest.

This religious feast is given by a squaw and is the outcome of a vow she has made to her god, the Sun. Should any one dear to her be in danger or distress, she prays to the Sun to protect and deliver him—vows that she will fast for forty days and nights, and then offer sacrifices to the Sun God (Natosi) as an evidence of her faith and her thankfulness.

At the appointed time she begins her fasting, with the expiration of which comes the second day of the "dance." Together with this chief offering comes the fulfilling of pledges made to the Sun by braves who have called upon their god when in desperate need, making a vow to torture themselves at the coming ceremony if saved, to prove their gratitude. These services were looked upon by the white authorities as being too barbarous, and the government put a stop to them, especially the one where an Indian would cut two parallel slits upon his breast, insert a strong piece of rawhide between the flesh and skin, tying the other end to a post, then slowly back away, chanting to the Sun God, until the skin would break and release him. The practice of this rite has been universally misunderstood, the white people considering it a mere show of bravery and savage intrepidity. The act was but the fulfilment of a sacred promise.

The Sun Dance begins with the building of an enormous lodge. This is practically a monument erected to the god of these Sun worshippers. It consists of eight upright posts about eight feet high, in octagonal formation, the top of each having a crotch. Within the center of the octangle another post is planted, rising four or five feet higher than the outer eight. Poles are then placed, one end upon the ground while the other rests in the separate crotches.

As the service progresses, hundreds of Indians completely surround this lodge, forming an entire circle about a quarter of a mile in diameter. At a given signal begins the most inspiring of all the Indian songs I ever heard.

The construction of this melody is of fourths, with now and then a third in approaching the completion of a phrase. The

subtlety of this invention is such as to make a perfect canonical figure, and this form it takes as section after section of the circle lifts its voice into the song, marching slowly towards the Sun Lodge.

The sparkling, glittering, glistening millions of many-colored beads decorating the buckskin costumes, thousands of painted feathers fluttering from the head dressings, and blankets of yellow, green and red, indiscriminately scattered among the throng, with the sun's rays playing upon the whole, gives the most marvelously beautiful kaleidoscopic effect as the army of singers closes in upon the Sun Lodge.

When this point is reached, a terrific chorus of war-whoops rends the air as hands grasp the leaning poles and shove them through the supporting crotches to the center post, where a rope loop is hanging to receive them. Upon these poles are placed blankets, head dresses and all kinds of offerings as sacrifices.

Out from her wigwam, so weak from fasting that she had to be supported, came the squaw who had prayed for help and had faithfully fulfilled her pledge to her god, and who was about to be released from the agonies of hunger.

She had her followers—four men and four women—wailing a mournful dirge. These attendants were gorgeously dressed, while she was most humbly appareled in a sombre-colored elk-skin robe. Slowly marching, this procession wended its way to the monument this squaw had had erected for the glorification of her Sun God, Natosi.

From now on, gaiety began and was soon in full blast. Dancing and singing and delicacies of food—to their taste—were reveled in during the remainder of the meeting. At this Sun Dance I met a chief by the name of Big Moon. We took a fancy to each other and became fast friends, this friendship still existing. He told me the second day after our meeting that I was to be his pale face son and gave me another name, Stem-e-a-ah-te-etchican, or Bull Shoe.

It was the last night of the Sun Dance, that seated in his wigwam, I heard the story of "Poia," the son of the Morning Star and the great prophet to the Blackfeet Indians.

During that night I learned much about their religion; of their belief in the Sun as the father, the Moon as the mother and the Morning Star as the only son. I was filled with the beauty of the Poia legend and made up my mind then that as soon as I could find it possible, that legend was to be put into libretto form for a serious grand opera.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Mr. Arthur Nevin's opera "Poia" was first performed at the Berlin Royal Opera House, April 23, 1910.—Ed.

When I was leaving the reservation for my return to the east, Big Moon gave me an Indian costume, and at parting took my hand and said, "I take your hand and wish you good luck. You come back to me and to my people again." And I did, the following summer.

During the greater part of the winter, the Blackfeet Indians are snowed up. The raging prairie winds fling the clustered snow flakes in blinding fury until an eddy catches and sweeps them into enormous drifts. The winter conditions continue into our late Spring, so it was June before I returned to the reservation.

During my second visit I became a nomad and seldom slept in the same camp two consecutive nights. This summer's experiences were as full of charm as the first. I took to this roving life most naturally and enjoyed the glorious freedom of a wanderer. I went more thoroughly into the legend of Poia, and found the poetic tale always more alluring as I learned from time to time the many episodes of the hero's life.

One day, seated in a lodge with an elderly Indian called White Grass, he told me the history of a song he had just sung. This song is very old and it survives because its creation came through a tragic circumstance.

A very beautiful Indian maiden loved a very handsome brave who returned this great love. They lived in the days when tribes fought tribes and the red man had many battles to fight.

One evening this lover strolled near his maiden's lodge and sang to her. In his song he told of his having been called by his chief to prepare for the war path, and that he was soon to depart; could she not hear the drums beating? The battle would be against a mighty foe. He sang to her of his great love and called upon Natosi to guard her while he was gone.

Days passed, and at evening of each passing day the maiden would go to a high knoll of the prairie and wait and watch for her lover's return.

One evening she heard, floating on a favoring wind, the song the Indians sang when nearing their camp after having been to war. She watched the long line of warriors, searching for the face she loved. The file passed and he was missing. She put her blanket about her, covering her head and face, and slowly returned to her lodge.

From that day she spoke not a word until the time for the Sun Dance approached. When the braves had completed the great Sun Lodge and were singing the ceremonial song, unseen through the excitement and confusion of the moment this beautiful maiden

climbed to the top of the high center post. In the song that she sang to her tribe, she told of her great love for him who had died for his folk; that she could not remain on earth without him; that he called to her all through the day and the night and she must go to him. And raising a long, shining blade of steel, she cried out in loud tones that through this blade she would pass to the happy hunting grounds where her lover waited to welcome her.

And all the little children of that time were taught the song and told the tale of the beautiful maiden who was not afraid.

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When the night came for my departure and I stood at the shed called a station, and saw the light of the locomotive winding along towards me, I took one last look over the vast expanse of rolling prairies, listened once more to the waving grass gently stirred by a delicious breeze, and saw once more the great, big stars in that land where nature remains the dominant note, those glorious stars that come fearlessly down so close to the earth!

Three steps and I entered the car and civilization.



# THE PIANOFORTE AND ITS INFLUENCE ON MODERN MUSIC

By EDWARD J. DENT

*O maledetto, o abbominoso ordigno,  
Che fabbricato nel tartareo fondo  
Fosti per man di Belzebù maligno  
Che ruinar per te disegnò il Mondo,  
All' Inferno, onde uscisti, ti rassigno.*

ARIOSTO, *Orlando Furioso*, IX., xci.

## I.

IT is generally agreed that the English are an unmusical race, but they have at any rate enjoyed a considerable reputation as inventors of labour-saving appliances. It is therefore not surprising that a tradition which seems to be fairly generally accepted by musical historians ascribes to England the invention of the earliest musical instrument in which a row of strings was caused to sound by mechanism actuated from a keyboard. The exact date of this invention cannot be fixed, nor is it certain whether the strings were plucked, as in the harpsichord, or struck with tangents as in the clavichord; but it is generally ascribed to the beginning of the thirteenth century, if not earlier. It was probably in England also that a special system of tablature notation for the organ was invented, of which a specimen has come down to us belonging to the first half of the fourteenth century, a hundred years before the first known specimens of organ music on the continent. A third point of interest is that among the instruments belonging to Henry VIII was "a virginall that goethe with a whele without playing uppon"—presumably the earliest known ancestor of the pianola.

These three landmarks in the early history of the pianoforte are characteristic, because they show at once the essentially mechanical nature of the instrument. Our ordinary staff notation is in its origin vocal, being derived by uninterrupted steps from the Greek accents. Sol-fa systems, whether we take Guido's or Miss Glover's, are merely mnemonic devices to assist the singer in

imagining the sounds he has to sing. But tablatures of all kinds—primitive organ tablatures, lute tablatures, recorder tablatures, the modern mandoline tablatures to be found in the back streets of Naples, or the new system of pianoforte notation invented by Ferruccio Busoni—imply a totally different principle in the minds of those who use them. A singer, a violinist, a trombone or horn player, playing from the staff, is obliged to imagine a definite sound before he can make it; a player from tablature might be utterly incapable of distinguishing one musical sound from another, much less of imagining a definite musical sound in his brain, and yet execute a piece of music correctly by following accurately the directions given for the motions of his fingers. The keyboard once invented and developed to a certain stage of easy manipulation, there was nothing surprising in the invention of Henry VIII's automatic player. From virginal to pianola is a much smaller step than from voice to virginal.

The keyboard was a labour-saving device. In the early days of the organ it enabled one man to admit air to several pipes simultaneously by the movement of a single key: later, as the keyboard attained the modern form, a single player could control at once as many as four or even more of these different sets of pipes—at any rate as long as he had some one else to provide the instrument with wind. Additional labour for the supply of wind was inevitable. If nature had provided man with four sets of vocal cords so that he might sing four part harmony by himself, he would have required in addition a corresponding increase of lung capacity and muscular strength. One man at the organ might control what would have been the work of four singers, but he could not create it.

The adaptation of strings to the keyboard brought about an entirely different situation. The technique of the organ assumed as a matter of course that its sounds were sustained as consistently as they would have been by voices. The organist could not vary the loudness of a note while he held it; but as long as he held it, his collaborators at the bellows could ensure its continuity of sound. The harpsichord<sup>1</sup> on the other hand made no attempt at continuity of sound. The string once plucked, the sound died rapidly away, just as it did in the case of the lute or harp. But musically, the harpsichord was no more an improvement on the lute and harp than the organ was on a choir of voices. The lute had a peculiar delicacy of tone-colour: the harpsichord could

<sup>1</sup>As a matter of convenience I venture to use the word harpsichord as signifying all varieties of keyboard instruments with plucked strings.

imitate this in a rough way, but it could not by the nature of its mechanism obtain any direct variety either of tone-colour or of loudness. Those who have not studied the harpsichord may have a difficulty in realizing this important difference between the harpsichord and the "*cembalo col piano e forte*" which has now taken its place. The loudness of the sound made by a plucked string depends on the amplitude of its vibrations. To make the sound louder, you must pluck the string more violently, that is to say, you must pull it further out of the straight before you let it go. Now in the harpsichord you may thump the keys as violently as you please, but you will make the sound no louder. The string has a certain fixed limit of elasticity, and the quill which plucks it has also its fixed limit of resisting power. At the moment when the string's resistance overcomes that of the quill, the string will be set in vibration. These two limits are not in any way alterable by the rate at which the finger depresses the key.

What then were the advantages of the harpsichord? They were these: the keyboard enabled a musician to indicate at any rate, if not to sustain, a much larger number of notes than the lute, and the comparatively slight resistance which the mechanism offered to the fingers permitted him to execute much more complicated and rapid successions of notes than was possible on the organ. It will at once be seen that these advantages were purely mechanical; they had no artistic value, and indeed involved of necessity the sacrifice of almost all the most essential elements of musical performance. It is probably for this reason that the literature of the harpsichord even in the days when the Fitzwilliam Virginal Book was compiled (early seventeenth century) is very small as compared with that which has come down to us for voices or even for the lute and organ. It is the lute rather than the virginal which occupies in the sixteenth century the place of the pianoforte in the nineteenth, and the most elaborate virtuoso-music for the lute belongs to the seventeenth century, although towards the time of Handel its popularity was certainly on the wane.

The harpsichord had one noteworthy characteristic in common with all stringed instruments which are plucked, and which all these instruments have in common with a group generally regarded as quite apart from them. All plucked strings are instruments of percussion, in that their sound is produced by an initial impact after which it dies away more or less rapidly. Now this initial impact is in all cases extremely violent in proportion to the sound which is still audible after the first shock. In the case of bells

or drums this fact needs no demonstration: in the case of the harpsichord it is less obvious, but still perceptible to a careful listener. As to the pianoforte, we have become so accustomed to regard its tone as the normal quality of musical sound that many people no doubt will say that the initial impact is only violent under the hands of a bad player. This is a point to which I shall return later on.

The psychological effect of the initial impact is a very important factor in the appreciation of music, and it is worth studying from a historical point of view. The disproportionate violence of the sound produced by instruments of this kind causes them to have a peculiarly penetrating effect. Bells are used for all sorts of non-musical purposes, ecclesiastical and secular, because they can be heard at a great distance and can be perceived clearly in the middle of subsidiary noises. This is proportionately true of various other percussion instruments. The roll of a drum, the thrum of a guitar, even the soft thud of a harp are often audible as noises when their distance is too great for them to be recognizable as musical notes. We do not regard the harp as a noisy instrument in the orchestra; but its penetrating power was once made very clear to me in a curious way. Sitting in a room of a house in a quiet London square, the windows shuttered and curtains drawn, I noticed a muffled and indefinable sound recurring at regular intervals. "That is our street band," said the owner of the house. Unbelieving, I opened the front door and looked out; on the further side of the square a violin, cornet and harp were performing. The melody of the cornet and violin at once arrested my attention, and I thought that I hardly heard the harp at all; then, as I listened more carefully, I recognized the rhythmical thud in the bass note at the beginning of each bar. In the street it was merely a soft accompaniment to the violin and cornet; in the house it was the only part of the music that I could hear at all.

The importance of the lute as an influence towards the change which took place in music towards the end of the sixteenth century has long been recognized by historians. But it has not been fully recognized that the change which made itself felt in harmony and tonality was primarily a change of rhythm.

Pure vocal music may obtain its rhythmical effects in two ways, by quantity—some notes being long and others short—or by stress—some notes being loud and others soft.

Modern English depends so largely on stress for its rhythms that many people have a difficulty in realizing quantitative values at all. But quantitative values, however negligible in verse,

cannot be disregarded in singing. This is one of the reasons why singers prefer Italian to English; the Italian language being free from such words as *never*, *women*, *sinister*, *tabernacle*, in which the first syllable must be strongly emphasized, but on no account prolonged. Indeed the more strongly the accented syllable in such words is stressed, the shorter must its actual duration be. Words like these are the despair of translators for music. The natural tendency of vocal music is towards obtaining rhythm by quantity. Stress in singing is a matter of positive difficulty, unless the singer is helped out by the use of words which he is accustomed to stress in speaking. Words of this kind act, we may say, as *pectra* to the vocal cords, and give the voice for the moment something of the value of a percussion instrument.

The vocal music of the madrigal period was written without bars, and in the hands of composers of the first rank attained effects of great rhythmical subtlety by the use of an almost exclusively quantitative method. Every one who has sung madrigals knows that the bar lines of modern editions must be systematically disregarded. The madrigal composers had, however, one other rhythmical device of great importance, the suspension or prepared discord. When one voice has, as it were, to push past another in a narrow place, an effect of resistance to be overcome is produced, which results in a sort of stress. Hence the systematic employment of suspensions in the music of the Palestrina period to mark cadences.<sup>1</sup>

Just as modern music of all kinds is arranged for the pianoforte, so in the sixteenth century all kinds of music were arranged for the lute and the virginal. Modern teachers of composition have said that to arrange an orchestral piece for the pianoforte is a safe test of its musical value. It would be interesting to know what the teachers of the sixteenth century thought about arranging madrigals for the lute. The suggestion implied is that all the essentials of the musical thought are present in the pianoforte arrangement. Yet any one who reads the lute and harpsichord arrangements of madrigals will surely agree that it is often very hard to get from them a clear idea of the essential thought of the original composer. For not only is much of the contrapuntal writing necessarily lost, owing to technical considerations, but quantitative values are obscured, and the rhythmical effect of suspensions wholly lost, because the suspended note has almost ceased to be audible at the moment when the percussion of the accompanying dissonance would logically demand its maximum

<sup>1</sup>See Edward J. Dent, *Italian Chamber Cantatas*, *The Musical Antiquary*, II, 142.

intensity. A complete rearrangement of rhythmical values is almost bound to be apparent. Yet it is not surprising that these arrangements were accepted, for we accept pianoforte arrangements with probably even greater willingness. An arrangement, whether for lute or pianoforte, is in fact a stimulus to memory and imagination. It might produce little impression on a listener who had never heard the original work before, but to any one who had even a slight recollection of it in its original shape, the proper effects would be supplied mentally and even subconsciously with an amount of ease dependent on the listener's musical experience. Moreover, we must remember that a listener of those days, even if only averagely musical, would have the madrigal style as a permanent general mental background, whereas for us a certain effort of the historical sense is always necessary even when we hear a madrigal sung with a due sense of style.

We may pursue this use of the harpsichord as a stimulus to imagination right down to modern times. As instrumental music developed, so we may trace its advances in the faint reflections given by the harpsichord either in actual arrangements or in independent compositions. Any instrument which has a sharply characterized style is easily reproduceable. As early as the days of Byrd we find trumpet effects written for the virginal, and we may note the gradual change in trumpet style through the trumpet effects in the harpsichord music of Purcell, Alessandro and Domenico Scarlatti down to Schubert, Mendelssohn and Chopin or later. It is absurd to suppose that a single sound on harpsichord or pianoforte could ever be mistaken for the sound of a trumpet; but play a familiar and characteristic trumpet phrase, and any one can respond to the stimulus of association.

Harpsichord and pianoforte music is in fact a mirror reproducing whatever is most characteristic of the general state of music for any given age. In the early eighteenth century, the most widespread type of music was the music of the Italian operas: consequently we find that Italian opera is the key to the understanding of the sonatas of Domenico Scarlatti, of Galuppi, Platti and C. P. E. Bach. The modern pianist to whom this period is represented only by a few of Scarlatti's most capricious and difficult pieces will hardly bring himself to believe this statement. Scarlatti is in fact one of the most original composers who ever lived, and one of the most diabolically ingenious in writing for peculiar effects of his instrument; but if we study him on a large scale and approach him by way of the others, after obtaining a first-hand acquaintance with representative Italian



arias, there can be no doubt about his indebtedness to the composers for the stage and their singers.

Let us return for a moment to that other characteristic of the harpsichord to which attention was drawn earlier, its rhythmical or rather accentual value as an instrument of percussion. Its effect on vocal music becomes very apparent with the rise of the monodic style. Except for the work of Lulli and the other writers of music to French words, all recitative without exception, Italian or English, was written in common time, and based on the assumption that there was a strong accent at the beginning of every bar. It was in this new style of vocal music that bar-lines became indispensable. The tendency of song is generally towards rhythm by quantity: the tendency of speech is generally towards rhythm by stress. When therefore musicians began to aim at a more definitely rhetorical style of setting words to music, when they were doing their best to make song conform to the habits of speech, it was inevitable that their music should be based mainly on a system of stress-values, the positions of which were indicated by bar-lines for the eye, and for the ear by chords struck on the accompanying instrument. It was no doubt largely owing to the desire for a sharp contrast with the four-beat rhythm of recitative that the Italian and English composers very soon developed a marked tendency to compose their arias in a rhythm of three beats.

The gradual standardization of the orchestra during the later seventeenth century and its not very remarkable attempts at composition for harpsichord alone might easily lead us to underrate the value of the harpsichord at this period. But wherever there is a figured bass there is the harpsichord, and the harpsichord formed the background of all attempts towards orchestral grouping. Practical experiment shows that the main value of the harpsichord in an orchestra (apart from definitely solo passages such as occur in J. S. Bach) is to give a rhythmical impetus, and this is corroborated in cases where a figured bass part for the harpsichord exists of a much simpler nature than that for the basses of the bowed instruments. It is on this strong sense of regular accent that the whole of Bach and Handel, vocal as well as instrumental, is built. No longer does a discord create an accent: accent justifies a discord, as being the stronger musical force of the two, and all that the discord can do is to help to exaggerate the accent.

## II.

From Italian opera both the form and the style of the classical sonata are derived. The idea of thematic development, as practised

by Beethoven, was possible only after the Italians in their desire for dramatic expression had broken up their melodies into short, passionate phrases capable of presentation at different emotional angles, of reiteration and of harmonic emphasis. It was just at this moment that the harpsichord began gradually to give place to the recently invented pianoforte. The pianoforte was the ideal instrument for the reproduction of such rhetorical effects as these. Moreover, Italian opera itself was at a very rhetorical stage. Its principal vice was not, as is too often suggested, the undue elaboration of *coloratura*, but poverty of melody, combined with over-emphatic declamation, in which the natural rhythm of the vocal phrase was distorted by violent syncopations. It was the same weakness that we find in the writing of Weber, though in Weber the fault is aggravated by other complications due largely to the direct influence of the pianoforte. Given such conditions, it was only natural that C. P. E. Bach's pianoforte works should be above all things rhetorical in manner. Their object was to transfer to the domestic keyboard the magnificent gesture of the Italian stage, and so far from disparaging their value we can only admire the skill with which the composer placed effects of such emotional brilliance within the reach of the amateur pianist.

What C. P. E. Bach did on a small scale, Mozart carried out with greater detail and a far wider range of genuine poetic emotion. It need hardly be pointed out that Mozart must be judged not by his pianoforte sonatas but by his concertos. The pianoforte concerto, which reached its perfection in his hands, shows even in the eighteenth century something of that intense striving for personality of expression which is one of the characteristics of the romantic movement. However passionate the utterance of the orchestra, it is the business of the solo pianoforte to show itself master of an even more poignant vehemence. The mere sight of the master seated at the keyboard gave a certain illusion of the very act of creation—an illusion of which the fullest advantage was taken in later years by Liszt. The introductory *ritornello*, so perfunctory in its original place as the prelude to a vocal solo, here could produce, especially when planned by the careful ingenuity of a Mozart, an effect of genuine poetic value, so that when the pianoforte entered and elaborated its themes, the singing voice of the orchestra was still present in imagination to the audience while they listened to the solo, though the actual sounds produced by the pianoforte were in themselves only a rattling of dry bones. It was the imagination of the audience that clothed them with flesh, while the player at the keyboard

by his command of purely rhetorical effect, could enhance their emotional value to an immeasurable extent.

The pianoforte was indeed the typical instrument of the romantic movement. Changes in music are not due merely to the haphazard invention of new instruments such as the double-action harp or the valve-horn. The instruments are invented because composers want them in order to express certain ideas. When the new instruments are in being they may, however, exercise a considerable influence in certain directions, because the devices for which they were invented become over-emphasized and stereotyped. The pianoforte of Beethoven's day was not remarkable for beauty of tone, as compared with modern instruments. But it suited the romantic composers, because it was essentially an instrument for the awakening of associations. Now one of the chief characteristics of romantic music is its dependence on association. Not only did it love to reproduce as best it could sounds really external to music altogether, but it made constant use, especially in its later phase, of genuinely musical effects of a kind which even the unlearned could recognize as having definite association with concrete ideas. Military effects, ecclesiastical effects, horns and all the poetic visions of the German forest, chromatic winds, waves in arpeggios, shepherds' pipes, minstrels' harps, and all the rest of the theatrico-musical Wardour Street of the early nineteenth-century—the pianoforte was the one instrument which could imitate them all. And while it could always imitate them well enough to ensure their recognition, its obvious inability to imitate them exactly could be regarded as providing that touch of unreality which distinguishes the true art of a so-called "camera-study" from the crude realism of a mere photograph.

Beethoven himself, it need hardly be said, was concerned with deeper things than these. But he was none the less keenly aware of the usefulness of the pianoforte in suggesting effects belonging to other instruments, although the effects which he employs are always strictly musical. His sonatas are full of passages which depend for their right understanding on the listener's recollection of the orchestra, sometimes even of a singer. To name only a few of such cases, there is the *tremolo* of low strings at the opening of the "Waldstein," the obvious oboe phrases and repeated horn octaves in the slow movement of the early sonata in D major, the vocal recitatives of the D minor and other sonatas, the horn theme of "Les Adieux." Paradoxical as it may appear, it is to Beethoven's deafness that we owe his

extraordinary development of the possibilities of the pianoforte. Totally indifferent as he must necessarily have been to the actual quality of the sounds produced by the instrument, as compared with the same sounds produced by other instruments, he viewed the pianoforte in its true light, as a mechanical means by which one player could indicate in a convenient and sufficiently intelligible way the huge range of sounds offered by the orchestra. He treated the instrument in his latest period much as he did the string quartet, not with a view of producing works like the quartets of Mozart in which every note is exactly in its right place, and no additional note could ever be added, but as a means of sketching the suggestive outlines of ideas which were too vast for any known means of execution ever to realize completely. To this we owe at any rate his employment of the keyboard to its widest compass, his marvellous variety in the ways of grouping notes under the hands, and perhaps also his original methods of using the pedals. It is in this last device that Beethoven foreshadows most definitely the modern treatment of the instrument.

To us at the present day Beethoven is so essentially the Beethoven of the third period that we can hardly realize how rare were the musicians who grasped that period's significance during the half-century which followed his death. The only composer who seems fully to have understood him was Berlioz, and Berlioz, though he realized the true function of the pianoforte with regard to the orchestra, classing it always with the instruments of percussion, did not compose pianoforte music. Liszt may perhaps have approached him, but Liszt's musical personality is so complex a matter that we cannot regard him as being in the direct line of descent from Beethoven.

There was, however, a fairly clearly-defined "classical" school of pianoforte-playing during the nineteenth century, the members of which based themselves on Mozart and Beethoven, adding as time went on the influences of Bach and Brahms. It was a school very reverent of authority, very unwilling to try experiments, very suspicious of any sort of music which did not conform strictly to a rather narrow tradition. Yet it included certain interpreters whose lofty idealism, cramped as it was, could not be without a lasting influence, and though some of its main principles were fundamentally unsound, the emphasis which it laid upon the purely intellectual side of interpretation may still give us reason to remember it with gratitude, now that the leaders who had the power to give it vitality in the world of music are long since dead.

The pianists of this "classical" school were in a certain sense romantic on fundamental principle. They systematically accepted the doctrine that the sounds of the pianoforte were equivalent in value to the sounds of sustaining instruments. Improvements in mechanism continually gave them additional cause to maintain this doctrine, and a "singing tone," although a physical impossibility, was the object of their constant study. Human nature never finds much difficulty in believing what reason proves to be impossible, and we need not be surprised at the strange results to which this curious habit of thought conduced. It is responsible at a quite early stage for those peculiarly uncomfortable moments in the violin sonatas of Mozart and Beethoven at which the pianoforte delivers the principal melody, supported by single bass notes in the left hand, while the violin fills up the middle with a commonplace figure of accompaniment, in which the most devotedly analytical mind could never pretend to find a thematic value. When the violin plays *pizzicato*, there is no reason to complain of the arrangement; but it seems to have taken composers some little time to discover this device.

It is possible to find occasional places in Beethoven, and even in Mozart, where the characteristic sound of the pianoforte is employed as a rhythmical noise rather than a musical note or combination of notes. In Mozart's *Rondo alla turca* the heavy chords of A major in the left hand near the end obviously represent the big drum, cymbals and triangle, which in German are always called *türkische Musik*; this is not apparent on the pianoforte, but is unmistakable when the movement is played on the harpsichord. Such examples as we may find in Beethoven are generally of the freakish type which Sir George Grove used to associate with the epithet "unbuttoned." Those of the romantics who kept themselves respectable did not perpetuate them; every note struck on the pianoforte was to have its definite musical value as part of a homogeneous harmonic system.

The pianoforte writing of Schumann illustrates this well. Schumann, who thirty or forty years ago was regarded as the greatest of the romantics, is now the least esteemed of a school with which the younger generation seems to feel utterly out of touch. His musical material is commonplace, they say, even vulgar at times: at his best he borrows from Weber and early Beethoven, at his worst he relapses into the slush of German *Studentenlieder*: his orchestral writing is impossible, his songs unendurably sentimental, his treatment of the pianoforte clumsy and monotonous in the extreme. Why then does middle age look

back to Schumann not only as the most lovable of all composers, but as one of the most daring and original, both in musical invention and in the technical handling of the pianoforte above all other instruments? It is a problem which we must try to solve scientifically, without appeals to sentiment, without horror at the iconoclastic tendency of youth.

Schumann is in fact the most complete expression of a certain phase of romanticism. His period had already classified certain ideas as romantic, it knew it was romantic itself, it thought it would be romantic to express those ideas in music. Hence Schumann is one of the most allusive of all romantic composers. His entire personality depends musically on association, and just because he is a pure musician who experiences everything through the medium of music, his allusions and associations are always musical and not realistic. Thus when he wishes to recall some external idea, maternity, young manhood, the German forest, the German Rhine, the idea expresses itself to his mind through the medium of an associated musical sound—a cradle song, a student's song, a fanfare of horns, a vintage song or cathedral music. And so intimately is the idea bound up with the associated melody that he forgets to apply to the melody the ordinary canons of musical criticism. However humble and trivial the song, judged simply as a piece of music, it is immeasurably ennobled in his mind because it symbolizes for him an essentially noble idea. He confuses in fact association (which may be of the most haphazard kind) with direct expression. This is essentially romantic. And this is one reason why Schumann is dead to the younger generation; the ideas are still noble, and will always be so, but the musical themes by which he knew them have lost their significance.

It was only natural then that Schumann should be attracted to the pianoforte above all other instruments. It was, as I have said, the instrument best suited for music dependent on association, and it was the instrument best suited for the expression of that exaggerated rhythmical energy of a very primitive type which is one of Schumann's most striking characteristics. It was his energy and enthusiasm that endeared him to us a generation ago; the humble simplicity of his themes only needed earnestness and conviction of performance to make them sound splendid and inspiring. One of the chief prophets of Schumann in those days used to say contemptuously of Mendelssohn, "the faster you play him the better he sounds"; the younger generation add thereto "and I suppose the more effect you want to get out of Schumann, the louder you must play him."



There is no doubt that the school of pianists who devoted themselves to Beethoven, Schumann and Brahms exercised a very valuable influence among amateurs in developing a manly and intellectual sense of interpretation—an influence perhaps underrated by a generation which is fortunately too young to recollect the epoch of Henri Herz and Brinley Richards. But this influence was valuable only in one direction. It was an influence that in other directions was positively deleterious, in that it encouraged the amateur to take technique for granted, to dash at a composition and give a rough impression of it rather than to study it carefully, to ignore, nay, even to despise what it called "the subtle seductions of colour." Nor was this influence confined to pianoforte-playing alone. In the days of Haydn, Mozart and Beethoven the pianoforte had taken only a small part in the realm of chamber-music; for all three composers the string quartet was the ideal combination of instruments. But from the death of Beethoven to the end of the nineteenth century composers of chamber-music were seldom happy unless they could combine the strings with the pianoforte. The string quartet was not congenial to Schumann and Mendelssohn, and although Brahms and Dvořák practised it with more success, it will probably be admitted by most musicians that their pianoforte trios, quartets and quintets are more characteristic of their genius.

We may indeed see the beginnings of this new development in the later trios of Beethoven. In the trios of Schumann and Mendelssohn the pianoforte is always the leader of the group: the principle is pushed to its extreme in the well-known trio of Tchaikovsky, in conception so touchingly beautiful, so monstrous in execution. The more natural balance of instruments, according to the ideas of that day, is obtained by setting four strings, rather than two or three, to match the pianoforte. But such works as the pianoforte quintets of Schumann, Brahms and César Franck, however much their musical ideas may claim our admiration, inevitably tempted performers into an increasing coarseness and roughness of performance, which could not fail to make itself apparent in string quartets as well. It was lucky that Brahms was able towards the end of his life to find salvation through his newly awakened interest in the clarinet as a chamber-instrument.

Even more serious damage was done in the department of vocal music. The very root and foundation of all music was corrupted, and it may be years before the art recovers from the injury which it has sustained. For the ruin of singing, Wagner has generally been held responsible, and if Wagner is to blame,

Beethoven is partly responsible for leading him astray. But it must be remembered that Beethoven, and even Wagner, wrote at a time when real singing was still respected and studied. It is not every one who can give an adequate performance of the solos or even of the choral parts of the Ninth Symphony and the Mass in D, but on the rare occasions when those works are sung, and really sung, by singers who possess not only the requisite physical strength but an irreproachable vocal technique as well, we realize that Beethoven was cruelly exacting to the human voice only because he knew that the human voice alone could interpret ideas of such vastness and grandeur.

As regards Wagner, it is a matter of common knowledge that he insisted on pure singing from his interpreters. One proof of his appreciation of real singing is the frequent prevalence of sound over sense in his librettos—*Wagalaweia*, *hojotoho* and the rest. Another is his choice of such singers as Heinrich Vogl—the only singer I have ever heard who could interpret Mozart's Don Ottavio—and Lilli Lehmann, who tells us in her autobiography that *Norma* "should be sung and acted with fanatical consecration!" That was in the old days when Wagner was so strange to musicians that he needed full-blooded singing to show how vocal his music really was. But when Wagner's music came to be well-known—thanks no doubt largely to the pianoforte as a disseminator of musical culture—singers (if I may charitably call them so) began to realize the disastrous principle that just as the pianoforte could indicate the sounds which listeners remembered having heard from the orchestra, so they, too, might indicate by a pianoforte treatment of the larynx the sounds which the composer had intended to be sung. It was a style of barking which has been generally associated with Wagner's name, because Wagner's operas were the quickest road to such success as is expressed in terms of lucrative engagements and laudatory press-cuttings: but it was a common disease in all concert-rooms and spread its infection even to English choral singing.

I shall be told that it is absurd to attribute this devastation of the art of singing to the influence of the pianoforte, because Wagner himself was a very mediocre pianist. And it is curious to note in this connection that Brahms, who was at one time a pianist of some repute, was at his very best in writing songs, songs indeed in which the sense of vocal phrase was so powerful that the literary values are often completely dominated by it, whereas his pianoforte writing is in many cases nothing short of barbarous. The fact is that the general musical characteristics of a given

period depend not on the output of its isolated men of genius, but on the general musicianship of the average man both amateur and professional. Viewing musical history from this standpoint, the most notable feature of the nineteenth century is the enormous number of pianofortes, accompanied by a correspondingly vast publication of pianoforte-arrangements. This obviously signifies a corresponding multitude of players, most of whom we can conveniently designate as strummers. It is therefore not surprising that we have subconsciously arrived at the disastrous condition of regarding the pianoforte, rather than the voice, as the normal means of producing music.

### III.

Could the complete harpsichord and pianoforte works of J. S. Bach, Handel, Haydn, Mozart, Beethoven, Schubert, Mendelssohn, Schumann and Brahms be suddenly obliterated from our knowledge, we might deplore the loss of much immortal music, but we should still feel that the position of those composers (except possibly Schumann) remained unaltered. To treat Domenico Scarlatti, Liszt and Chopin in the same way would be practically to obliterate those composers altogether. To them the keyboard was not just one among many outlets of expression, but almost the only means by which they could convey their ideas to the minds of their audience. Such concentration, even in the case of composers below the first rank, necessarily leads to considerable expansion of the resources offered by the particular instrument. A composer who feels that he has the orchestra at his disposal will probably not want to waste time in trying to obtain from the pianoforte effects which he can more easily obtain elsewhere: he will be content for the most part to proceed on traditional lines, making innovations only when they are the outcome of what is a new thought, not merely a new effect of sound. We see this, generally speaking, in the late works of Beethoven. There are, it is true, certain new colour-effects produced, but they are the result of and almost always completely overshadowed by the expression of the musical thought itself, an expression still based on the classical principle that a note sounded on the pianoforte is fully equivalent to the same note sung or sounded on another instrument.

With Domenico Scarlatti, Liszt and Chopin the case is different. If we accept the common comparison of pianoforte music with black-and-white drawing, we may say that, whereas the classical school insisted on firm outlines, sometimes even on the precision of the architect's office, these other composers adopted

rather the methods of those artists who carefully avoid drawing a single line accurately but obtain vivid and fascinating effects of sunlight and texture by free and bold indication of shadows, leaving the spectator's imagination to complete the picture. They start definitely from the principle that their notes are not real sounds, but merely indications of them; they assume in their hearer's minds a general familiarity with the music of the day, and stimulate imagination, not by attempting to present essential forms, but by ingenious complications of subsidiary and accessory ideas. In this sense Domenico Scarlatti, in spite of his date, in spite of his clear-cut logic, is to be classed as a romantic, little though he may appear to have in common with Liszt. They are romantic in so far as their music is music about music, rather than music about life; they are classical in that they accept their instrument frankly for a sham, and never pretend that it is anything else.

To dissect the personality of Liszt would require a whole volume, and I dare not attempt here more than the roughest indications. His style is derived in the first instance from that of Weber. It is curious that Weber, the feeblest and emptiest of all the romantic composers, should yet have been so outstanding a personality that not a single romantic composer, not even Chopin, who is needless to say by far the greatest of them, can be explained without reference to him. Now Weber, put shortly, is in the main Rossini arranged for the pianoforte. Almost every mannerism that we recognize as typical of Weber may be traced in the airs of *Tancredi* and *Semiramide*, where we may note, perhaps with surprise, the classic dignity of the born Italian, the born singer. Why, one wonders, do these noble and passionate phrases sound so flashy and rhetorical under Weber's fingers? It is because the pianoforte (we must not forget that Weber was a pianoforte virtuoso) gives them a feverish over-emphasis; the indolent barcarolle becomes a leaping waltz, the stately procession a military strut. To this foundation Liszt adds the satanic wizardry of Paganini, the tender sentiment of Schubert (Rossini again, seen through a different temperament) the still tenderer sentimentality of Bellini, later on, a touch of Magyar folk-song, more consciously acquired than innate, in spite of his ancestry, and eventually, the pious musical phraseology of the age which proclaimed the Immaculate Conception and invented the harmonium to sing its praises. It was only a pianist who could assimilate so many influences. They were nearly all second-hand to begin with, and the only way to present them effectively was to treat them as

holy relics, vaporous shapes, faint exhalations, dreams not to be evoked but by the magician's touch.

Here, too, we see another essential feature of romanticism—the visible person of the player. Beethoven stands already near enough to the romantics to make us feel thankful that his deafness made it impossible for him to become a travelling virtuoso. He wrote his thoughts down that others might interpret them. Liszt comes before the public himself to perform the act of creation.

So much exaggeration has been practised in writing about Liszt, whether by his admirers or his detractors, that it is difficult to analyse him dispassionately. Indeed to analyse dispassionately so passionate a personality seems almost blasphemous to either side. I confess that I find him far too fascinating as a subject for dissection for me to consider his music from an ethical standpoint. And it is most important that modern musicians and modern critics should study Liszt in this way, not merely because he is the foundation of modern pianoforte-playing and pianoforte composition, but also because his very shortcomings as a composer of real music make it comparatively easy for us to observe the technical principles underlying his method.<sup>1</sup> If he arouses no emotions in us, so much the better; we must study him as we study strict counterpoint, free from secondary distractions.

The first thing to note is the new conception of the pianoforte as a solo instrument in the grand manner. This is not due to Liszt alone, it is true, but Liszt is the most noteworthy representative of the public virtuoso type. The classical sonatas, from C. P. E. Bach onwards, had been written for domestic consumption; even the concertos, like the symphonies of that day, were more what we should class as chamber-music—indeed a concerto of C. P. E. Bach is a much quieter style of composition than the pianoforte quintets of Brahms or César Franck. Further, we must remember that the pianoforte had always been for obvious reasons the instrument of extemporization, an art which in classical times was constantly practised in public. Those who could not extemporize themselves could buy extemporizations ready-made by all the composers of the day—preludes, toccatas, fantasias, impromptus, to say nothing of fugues, for the fugue is above all others the ideal extemporary form—at any rate for those who have the requisite genius.

Secondly, let us consider the resources of the instrument itself. It is not necessary here to go into the history of successive

<sup>1</sup>I refer not to the technique of pianoforte-playing but to the technique of composition for the pianoforte.

advantages in manufacture. The modern instrument, in spite of improvements in resonance, in action, in quality of tone, remains in fundamental principle the same as it was in Liszt's early days. A string is set in vibration by a hammer—an initial impact of a certain violence, followed by a gradual diminution of the sound. The violence of the initial impact can be adjusted exactly by the action of the finger on the key, and the range from soft to loud is, especially on a modern instrument, extremely wide. Whether it is possible, however, to alter the quality as apart from the intensity of any given note is a much-debated question. Pianists will probably say that there can be no doubt about it for a moment—have not the teachers catalogued and classified as many varieties of touch as there were smells in the streets of Cologne? Men of science, on the other hand, while admitting that the problem presents difficulties of great mathematical complexity, tend to think that the quality of a note cannot possibly be altered by any variety of touch.<sup>1</sup>

"Good touch," says Professor W. B. Norton<sup>2</sup> of Belfast, "consists in the power to produce fine gradations of intensity and in complete mastery of *legato* and the use of the pedal." Mr. Spencer Pickering, F. R. S.,<sup>3</sup> similarly maintains that the apparent difference of quality is due to varying intensity and length of one note as compared with other notes struck simultaneously or not, in the course of a piece of music. A further difference is due to pedalling.

It is in fact the right-hand pedal which gives the pianoforte an advantage possessed by no other instrument to any appreciable extent. A pianoforte without the pedal would be almost as limited in its effects as a violin without a bow. For the principal value of the pedal is not merely to sustain sounds when the finger for some reason is obliged to release the key, but to reinforce sounds by allowing other strings to vibrate in sympathy with them. To what extent and in what precise ways these sympathetic vibrations affect the "colour" of the pianoforte is a matter for acousticians to investigate: but it is hardly necessary to point out that even if the ear is a very unsafe guide in attempting to estimate qualities of sounds, it is none the less obvious that a rearrangement of the overtones by sympathetic reinforcement must necessarily have some considerable effect on the quality which these overtones produce.

<sup>1</sup>See a very interesting correspondence on the subject of "Pianoforte Touch," in *Nature*, May, June and July, 1913.

<sup>2</sup>*Nature*, 10 July, 1913.

<sup>3</sup>*Ibid.*, 31 July, 1913.



Professor G. H. Bryan, F. R. S.,<sup>1</sup> who is inclined to believe that difference of quality *is* obtainable by difference of touch, concludes his arguments with the very pointed remark that "the average pianoforte pupil has too much to do with learning execution to trouble about 'touch,' and very few professionals produce variations in the quality of their notes at all approaching the possible maximum."

The enormous importance of "touch" in pianoforte-playing is in fact only just beginning to be realized. There are, it is true, plenty of amateurs whose touch is agreeable enough to make up for other technical deficiencies; there are a fair number of professional pianists whose touch seldom offends. But there are very few indeed who possess a complete mastery over a really wide range of tone-quality, and make full use of this mastery as a means of intellectual interpretation. I venture to doubt whether Liszt himself realized its possibilities as they are realized by such a player as Ferruccio Busoni; Chopin, on the other hand, while confining himself to a much smaller field of pure technique, must have had an unparalleled sensitiveness to the values of delicate gradations.

Professor Bryan initiated the correspondence in *Nature*, from which I have quoted, in connexion with experiments on the pianola.<sup>2</sup> The pianola supplies one interesting test for the way in which different composers treat the pianoforte. A later correspondent found that, whereas the pianola could render Beethoven's sonatas "acceptably," it failed completely with the nocturnes and ballades of Chopin. To this I would add that Liszt is of all composers the one who is most effective on the pianola, and I venture to think that most people would be in fairly general agreement with these views. Now it is obviously absurd to suggest that Beethoven and Liszt are both greater composers than Chopin, and equally absurd to suggest the opposite. The pianola test has in fact nothing to do with the musical merits of the three, but applies solely to their methods of handling the pianoforte. The explanation is that, in the case of Beethoven, as I have suggested earlier, the musical thought is so completely independent of the means of presentation that it will dominate even a mediocre execution. With Liszt the handling of the instrument is so masterly that, even when delicacies of touch are ignored, the mere lay-out of the notes supplies an extra-

<sup>1</sup>*Nature*, 8 May, 1913.

<sup>2</sup>I hope I may be permitted to use the word *pianola* to cover all mechanical pianoforte-players of the type.

ordinary variety of picturesque colour effects. Both Beethoven and Liszt in fact depend generally speaking on evenness and equality of touch, Beethoven because he accepts the pianoforte tone as the equivalent of the tone of other instruments, Liszt because the extreme simplicity of his musical idea allows him to design his colour effects in large patches, covering a whole phrase or more.

The inequalities of human performance may sometimes produce a pleasing play of light and shade on the regular texture of these broad surfaces, but there are indeed many cases where a perfect homogeneity of tone quality, such as is exceedingly difficult of achievement by a pianist, is positively demanded; e. g., in the quasi-geometrical patterns of the Variations on *Weinen, Klagen*. On the other hand, the ballades and nocturnes of Chopin, depending as they often do on an etherealized recollection of Bellini's arias, demand a more subtle delicacy of colour-gradation. "Complete command of all varieties of colour," says Sir Charles Stanford<sup>1</sup> with his invariable penetrating insight, "is the almost exclusive possession of the human voice." Liszt could seldom do more than *transcribe* Bellini; Chopin's genius *interprets* him. If we have ever heard the operas sung, Liszt can recall the singer to our imagination; Chopin goes further, makes us almost feel that not even Malibran herself could have suffused those tender melodies with an inspiration so enchanting.

Transcriptions were the principal works of Liszt's first period, and he remained a transcriber all his life. For if, as Busoni says, "notation is in itself the transcription of an abstract idea" and "again, the performance of a work is also a transcription," then surely pianoforte-music, more than any other kind of music, is transcription in its very essence. The Virginalists, Domenico Scarlatti, C. P. E. Bach, Mozart, Beethoven himself, were, as we have just seen, all of them transcribers when they sat down to their keyboards, and if Liszt has had to bear most of the bad reputation attaching to transcriptions, it is because he happened to be the prince of transcribers and a poor composer of original music. For even what he thought was original was in a sense transcription—either a transcription of non-musical ideas, or a transcription of musical ideas that already connoted certain definite associations—the typical romantic method—or of ideas which he may have thought were his own, but which were only his ideas about Schubert, Weber or Schumann. It makes no difference

<sup>1</sup>*Musical Composition*, London, 1911.

whether he writes for the pianoforte or for the orchestra. Indeed his symphonic poems are pianoforte music even more than Schumann's symphonies are, for they are better planned for the pianoforte. Their orchestration is effective enough, but they almost always proclaim their pianoforte origin: the single bass note at the beginning of a bar, the other parts coming in after a quaver's rest, the long sustained chords *pianissimo* that vainly try to reproduce the effect of the pedal, the overwhelming predominance given to the harp—these are sufficient indications.

The musician who hates transcriptions has often good enough grounds for his hatred. A transcription is a commentary, just as much as an analytical programme; and he may reasonably say that it is an insult to his intelligence and his imagination. But commentaries are not all of them foolish, and if our serious musician is willing to listen to a lecture on Bach delivered in the ordinary way, why should he be indignant over a lecture on Bach that is played in Bach's own language—the normal language in fact of all musicians—music itself? Our serious musician may perhaps reply that he resents some comparatively simple and straightforward piece of old music being made to sound enormously elaborate and insuperably difficult to play. To this I would say that if a transcription sounds difficult it is either badly written or badly played. A really great artist makes the most complicated music sound clear, easy and natural—herein lies one of the best tests of good playing.<sup>1</sup>

#### IV.

It is mainly from Liszt that the modern school of advanced pianoforte-music is descended. But the interrelation of modern pianoforte-writing with modern orchestration and modern harmony presents a complicated problem compared with which the unravelling of Liszt's own personality is simplicity itself. The pianoforte remains always the instrument of associations, and associations, like parasites, increase and multiply in all arts as time goes on, their birthrate being very considerably encouraged by modern facilities for popular dissemination.

The discords of modern harmony arise out of two main causes, first, the ruthless contrapuntal independence of part-writing, and secondly the acceptance of chords, dissonant and consonant alike, as effects of *timbre*. A mixture-stop in an organ

<sup>1</sup>If my serious musician goes on to say that transcriptions of Bach's organ works only sound like a pianoforte duet in which the two performers cannot keep together, then I cordially agree with him.

sounds the common chord of every single note on the keyboard; but its general effect is one of *timbre* alone, without any conscious reference to harmony. We know that any single note may be split up into its component harmonics, and that *timbre* depends on the relative intensities of these; then why should we not construct new *timbres* synthetically, by sounding several notes together? If the organist may harmonize a melody in consecutive major thirds, fifths and octaves, why should not the pianist, or any one else, harmonize it in consecutive seconds, fourths, or sevenths? It amounts to no more than pulling out a different stop. The pianoforte is obviously the most practical instrument on which to try experiments of this kind, and so about 1887 there rises on the world of music that delightfully quaint and entertaining composer Erik Satie, followed by Debussy, Ravel, Leo Ornstein and others. And if even Gounod experimented with the device of "playing on the cracks"—i. e., striking seconds—in his charming little *Dodelinette*, why should we be taken aback when Busoni in his *Sonatina seconda* writes rapid scales in consecutive seconds? And who shall say that the pianoforte is not a labour-saving device when the same *Sonatina* opens with an effect for which Berlioz would have required two men at least, one to hold the cymbal by its strap and the other to beat on it with the *baguettes d'éponge*?

Modern composers are in fact realizing more fully than ever that the pianoforte, being a percussion instrument, is the best possible medium for which to transcribe the effects of other instruments of percussion. A clerical Second Empire produced Lefébure-Wély's *Les Cloches du Monastère*, and perhaps a future historian may connect up the unending tintinnabulations of the modern French and English school with the revival of plain-song and other mediævalisms. But these bells are not all church bells, nor are they the only noises that have passed into music. Alkan gave us a clever pianoforte picture of an express train—just such an absurd train as Erckmann-Chatrian described in the story of the blacksmith—and Vaughan Williams in the "London Symphony" has suggested the jingling carthorses on their way to Covent Garden and the skidding of motor-omnibuses in Piccadilly. Debussy's amusing *Minstrels* are a step nearer primæval barbarism than Alkan's *Le tambour bat aux champs*. The noisier our street life becomes, the more insistent is the need for musical sounds that can penetrate it, and it is exactly the instruments of percussion—bells, "sick giants" (I don't know what their trade name is, nor how they make the noise, but the effect is certainly percussive)

and street pianofortes—which force themselves most irresistibly on the unwilling ear. And so it is in the percussion department that the modern orchestra is most characteristic. It cannot make very much difference to an audience whether a composer uses a third hautboy or a cor anglais, a tuba or a bass trombone; but the harp, the xylophone, the glockenspiel, the celesta and the *timpani* arrest attention at once. Moreover the attentive concert-goer will notice even in the treatment of wind and strings an increasing love of short sharp attacks rather than sustained tones. Bellini was accused of treating the orchestra as an overgrown guitar: is it not the tendency of modern composers to turn the orchestra into a monstrous pianoforte?

I do not in the least wish to quarrel with the tendencies of modern pianoforte music, considered as a thing by itself. On the contrary, it is certainly the modern composers who have best understood the instrument. To criticize their works as music would be beyond the scope of this paper. But it is clear that the modern treatment of the instrument demands generally, and may very likely demand more and more urgently, a standard of technique very far beyond the abilities of the average amateur. This is in some ways a positive advantage, because if the immense possibilities of the pianoforte are only to be exploited by those specialists who dedicate their lives to it, we may perhaps find amateurs giving up the pianoforte in despair and preferring to devote their attention to other means of making music. What the effect of the pianola on musical intelligence will be it is difficult to forecast. Under the hands and feet of a skilled operator it can produce an astonishingly successful imitation of a good player; but accomplished pianolists are almost as rare as accomplished pianists, and the average energetic and unintelligent manipulator is probably contributing disastrously towards the deadening of our nerves to the appreciation of finely graded tone. Moreover, the pianola suffers at present from the serious drawback that its mechanism for controlling the pedal necessarily hampers to some extent the use of precisely that device which as I have said before is the most essential advantage of the pianoforte, a device which in modern music demands an ever increasing skill and subtlety in the method of its employment. The pianola then, valuable as it may be for the popularization of all kinds of music, is more likely to intensify the evil effects of the pianoforte than to direct our taste towards the understanding of its true individuality.

The problem of the pianola and its influence may indeed well be one of the gravest importance in musical education and

appreciation. For as it is, the pianoforte already completely dominates practically the whole of modern music in one way or another. The tempered scale and its offshoot the whole-tone scale, so fiercely denounced by a certain school of teachers, are, I think, among the least of the evils which it has imposed upon us. Far worse is its tyranny of stress accent, leading inevitably to vulgarization of rhythm, to the acceptance of false values in quality of sound, to an indifference towards sustained melodic writing—and therefore *a fortiori* towards contrapuntal writing, since counterpoint consists in the combination of melodies—and, as a general result of all these things, to a dangerous atrophy of our power of *thinking in music*.

To overthrow this tyranny is impossible. We cannot send out emissaries into all parts of the earth to destroy every single pianoforte that exists. Even if we could, the musical antiquaries would be reconstructing them, not for general use of course, but for purposes of scientific investigation—"we must hear what this old music really sounded like on the original instruments for which it was intended!" There is only one remedy: we must give audiences something better. The unsophisticated are quite ready to accept it. It is ready to hand—it has always been so and always will be. It needed no invention: it was created for us. It is music itself, the first and only instrument. Will no one revive the lost art of singing?



## SEBASTIAN BACH, MODERNIST

By PHILIP GREELEY CLAPP

**R**ECENTLY we musicians have come to realize that our art is still very young, so young that it has not outgrown the period of rapid and at times erratic progress. Serious music lovers are less disturbed than formerly over changing standards and bewildering tendencies, for they have learned that the apparent destruction of law and order in music has not been a foretaste of degeneracy but a clear sign that the art has not yet evolved for itself a sufficiently far-reaching vision of its own purposes, powers, and limitations to establish durable standards.

If we seldom nowadays commit the error of over-estimating the permanent qualifications of our present standards,—or rather hypotheses,—we are prone to fall into another and almost equally grave fault, that of failing to remember and profit by the successes and mistakes of the past. Frequently repeating the platitude that music as we know it is less than two hundred years old, we either shelve Palestrina and Lassus as “primitives” or take only an antiquarian interest in them, while Bach, who is a trifle too great to be disposed of by either of the above methods, we take for granted. Then we credit Haydn and Mozart with being, if not the actual founders of modern music, at least its first two shining exemplars, prate about melody, homophony, and the sonata form, and settle complacently down to the pleasant exercise of rediscovering the technique of the two-and-a-half or three centuries which culminated in Johann Sebastian Bach.

The composer, like the poet or novelist, has this advantage over the pictorial artist or sculptor, that his materials are not costly and his product not bulky; if therefore he is not esteemed in his lifetime, he can be reasonably sure of making a record and leaving it where it will not get in anybody's way. On the other hand, the composer suffers from a handicap which only the dramatist even partially shares, that of being dependent on the intelligence and good-will of other people to present his ideas adequately to all but a very few of his public. At any time circumstances which he cannot control or even foresee, the occurrence of which, too, has no bearing on the merits of his works, may for a longer or a shorter time lock up his ideas where

only those who have trained themselves to read music without its being performed, as everyone reads a play, can for the time being know and understand him.

The change, desirable in itself, from small salons to concert halls necessitated sweeping changes in the manufacture of instruments, practically all in the direction of greater sonority, the muffled tones of the viol family giving way to the thicker yet more piercing tones of the violin, viola, and 'cello, the delicate harpsichord and the more than delicate clavichord yielding to the piano with hammers, and so forth; these mechanical changes in turn brought it about that a large amount of the chamber-music of Bach and his forerunners is virtually obsolete, in spite of its great beauty, because the better a piece of music is adapted to the peculiar tone of a clavichord, a viola da gamba, or what not, the muddier and clumsier it sounds on our modern instruments which are accurately designed to fulfill new purposes, at the sacrifice of their capacity to continue old. Similarly the growth of the vocal solo with homophonic accompaniment as a substitute for the old contrapuntal ensemble, has in two centuries bred a race of singers who know or care nothing about ensemble, counterpoint, or harmony; and while a chorus or choir singer has to learn at least some slight responsibility for balance with his or her colleagues, yet to the average vocalist of today, all music is either "tune" or "filling," and if the artistically satisfactory performance of a mass of Palestrina, a madrigal of Lassus, or a motet of Bach is beyond the technical powers of the average chorus of today, it is still further beyond the interpretative intelligence of the average choral conductor. Last but not least, the admission into good repute of stereotyped forms, accompaniment figures, and harmonic progressions, has perhaps made composition and analysis a shade easier for lazy people, but it has certainly more than offset this somewhat doubtful gain by extensively corrupting musical taste; only today, after more than a century during which composers have even died for the cause of musical freedom, have we begun to throw off our mumbling worship of rule-of-thumb to a degree which enables us in some measure to appreciate not only the free forms of today, but also those of the past.

Technique is not the end, but the means, of artistic expression; but as means it is vitally important, in that any serious limitation of technique draws a deadline which expression is powerless to cross. Certainly the technique of composition, and probably that of performance, was during Bach's life at one of the highest points which it has attained during the history of music; and

equally certainly fifty years later, in the time of Haydn and Mozart, it was at one of the lowest. It is the purpose of this article to analyze what was the nature of this general collapse, and then to show by examples that music has been and is gradually regaining Bach's high ground by the long-drawn-out series of "innovations" of Beethoven and his successors.

The expressiveness of music suffered from the drop, as it was bound to do, because the tinkling formal stereotypes of Haydn and Mozart were utterly inadequate to express the mighty ideas of a Bach until a Beethoven should appear on the scene to pummel the models into some degree of flexibility. In the process of regeneration, however, expression has progressed more rapidly than technique, for outside reasons. The coincidence of an era of mechanical discoveries with political and geographical readjustments has brought different parts of the world into touch with one another, with the result that there are a few more ideas and a much more general sophistication than in Bach's time; and where small men have bred to degeneracy and mediocre men have persisted in their ruts as a result of the new strain of living, a few very great men have found only opportunities for growth and development in our modern complexity. Thus isolated composers have reattained, or in very rare instances even surpassed, Bach in expression, where few or none have even approached his mastery of technique.

In turn, if Bach represents a technical highwater mark which we have not yet passed, his expression was the utmost which can be expected of his period. A composer is subject to the outside influences of his musical past and his social present, and the inner influences of his specifically musical facility, the keenness of his intelligence, and his general vitality. In all these influences, Bach was fortunate. He happened to be born in time to epitomize the contrapuntal and coloristic achievements of over two centuries of cumulative effort; sacred, secular, and dramatic technique was ripe, and waited only for a great man. So far as social influence was concerned, Bach was fortunate in coming of a family in which music was second only to religion and in living in communities where at least music was respected and esteemed; if his education was not remarkably broad or far-reaching according to modern standards, it was at least somewhat better than the average in his day, and was wholesome and practical. His musical facility was unequalled before or since, his extraordinarily large output being of high average quality, in spite of his having had to write to order nearly every day; his intelligence was keen, as is shown

by his preoccupation with such mathematical problems as that of equal temperament in tuning, which he was almost the first important composer to understand at its true value; while in the matter of vitality, his long life, his freedom from illness, his unceasing activity, his tremendous musical productivity, and his twenty children all indicate at least the absence of anaemia and neurasthenia. Perhaps in a modern environment he would seem to lack college-bred sophistication; yet even today health, intelligence, enthusiasm, genius, and character form a combination for which a young man might gladly be willing to sacrifice luxury, predigested education, spoon-fed opportunities, and "pull."

Equipped as we have seen, Bach devoted his life to the steadfast pursuit of his profession, expressing in his music a greater variety and degree of emotion than anyone had ever expressed in music before, and continually expanding and intensifying his technique, sometimes in order the better to serve as a vehicle for his new ideas, sometimes just from sheer vitality. Partly because his own tastes ran that way, partly because, as the chronologically parallel but otherwise totally dissimilar career of Händel shows, there was something in the spirit of the times that was waiting to be expressed, his most notable advances were in the direction of grandeur. Except for Händel, never before and rarely since has a composer chosen so preeminently to identify himself with the grand manner, unless we accept some who have let themselves drift into bombast and inflation, traits certainly not characteristic of the compositions of Bach. But it was not always "Ercles' vein" with him; one can find here and there in his works the emotion without the sickliness of the modern introspective pessimists. A sympathetic, serious man who could express anything, Bach saw fit most of the time to compose in a vein of enthusiastic activity and life. That enervated, lackadaisical people then and now should not enjoy his music is the most natural thing in the world; that they should attribute their lack of appreciation to "dry learning" or "over-developed technique" on his part is a beautiful example of the dirty, burned pot calling the bright, new tin-dipper black.

Over against the achievements of this true superman, what achievements shall we set of the amiable Haydn and the suave Mozart, to account for the fact that they are commonly regarded as the fathers of modern music, while Bach is set aside as the latest of the primitives?

Now, the last thing in the world which a sensible musician should do is to belittle Haydn and Mozart. Haydn in his oratorios

and church music (which we never hear nowadays) shows himself a worthy if less significant continuator and simplifier of desirable traits in musical composition, which I hope presently to show were Bach's. Mozart in his operas expands, by a happy synthesis of Italian melody and form with Bach's fluency and color, musical dramatic expression to or beyond the point which Bach would have reached had he tried the field of opera. But neither Haydn's sacred music nor Mozart's dramatic music is held up to us as a prototype; their joint fatherhood of the classical symphony, with a host of concomitant ideas and practices, is always and everywhere understood to be their prime hold on modern attention, their fundamental claim to our fellow-feeling. What magic virtue is there in this contribution, that we joyfully acclaim the contributors as being one with ourselves, whilst we regretfully shut out poor old Johann Sebastian as a person whom we should like to know, but who "doesn't belong?"

It is held that the homophony of Haydn and Mozart, by hastening the obsolescence of counterpoint, made possible the introduction of folk-song, and thereby humanized and democratized music. All very well if true, provided the cure prove not worse than the disease. On the face of it, nobody likes counterpoint as such; nowadays many pupils refuse to study it, and those who do treat it as an engineer treats the calculus, as a necessary evil which combines mental discipline with practical applicability in certain cases. Of course, nothing could be unfairer to the layman than to make him choose between studying counterpoint and staying out of reach of all music.

But as a matter of fact nobody asks the layman to do either; one can hear and even, with practice, closely follow counterpoint without having studied it, though actually this is really unnecessary, most counterpoint being "background." More important, however, is the fact that counterpoint, so far from being an artificial infliction, is actually demanded by the human ear. The veriest hack, trying to boil the pot by making the cheapest order of trashy "intermezzos" for theater consumption knows that a fair number of counter-phrases and brief "inner voices" for high 'cello or low cornet, or arabesques for the lascivious flute, are indispensable to make his piece "go" with even the most frivolous audience. What is the origin of the "whiskey tenor," characteristic of all impromptu male singing? The instinct for counterpoint, like the other musical instincts, is latent in most people to a moderate degree, and will either develop under cultivation, or fail for lack of it.

Of course, a brief examination of Haydn's and Mozart's symphonies, quartets, and sonatas shows, not a strict homophony or total absence of counterpoint, but the presence only of intermittent counterpoint of a very rudimentary sort recurring in a stereotyped way, instead of the continually active, varied, and vital counterpoint of a Bach. They have not therefore substituted for counterpoint something else that is better, but have merely contented themselves with an inferior kind of counterpoint. Now, in music as in the novel and the drama, the public is sorely beset by the peculiar temptation of the stereotype; that is to say, the layman in these arts is more than usually disposed to forego the active attention and concentration demanded by works of strong individuality so long as there is a steady supply of a class of product which is pleasant and perhaps sensationally exciting, but which by using familiar material in a familiar way makes no demand upon the intelligence of its public. Naturally, music of this kind may serve quite well as one step in an education for children, but much repeated it is likely to retard musical growth as seriously as continued perusal of "best sellers" retards literary growth. For this reason Haydn and Mozart are not to be thanked for substituting a stereotype for Bach's fluent and fecund contrapuntal inventiveness; and it is noticeable that Wagner and many of our contemporaries from Strauss to Schönberg and from Franck to d'Indy have striven, sometimes with eminent success, to write continuously in a style of counterpoint which is the modern equivalent of Bach's.

The effect of counterpoint again on the introduction of the folk-tune into skilled composition has been misunderstood and falsely estimated. The folk-song is typically "pure melody," that is to say melody which is complete in itself, without harmonization. Unfortunately the modern ear does not care to hear long unaccompanied melodies in serious compositions, and so the folk-song when used has to be accompanied. Careful examination of many accompaniments to folk-songs in collections and in large works where they are quoted seems to show that a strictly homophonic accompaniment either repels by its obviousness in forcing upon the ear the harmonies which the melody alone sufficiently implies, or else distracts by its deliberate employment of far-fetched harmonies arbitrarily chosen to avoid the obvious. On the other hand, while a labored academic strict counterpoint of the stereotyped sort beloved of amateur quartets nearly always seems in poor taste, there are hundreds of instances where the charm of a folk-song is not obscured, but enhanced, by an accompaniment



in which all the accompanying voices employ a very free sort of counterpoint based upon tasteful and never obtrusive imitation and extension of motives taken from the original melody. It was therefore hardly necessary for Haydn and Mozart to substitute stereotyped for vital counterpoint, so far as the introduction of folk-song was concerned.

This whole matter of folk-music moreover raises still new questions. Great stress is laid upon the democratizing effect of the folk-song in serious music, and Haydn and Mozart are thereby acclaimed as it were the saviors of music from a sort of learned snobbishness. But what did they introduce, and how?

Folk-song, as opposed to art-song, is transmitted from mouth to mouth, with the result that it gradually becomes modified here and there, until by the time that it becomes traditional it is the composite product of many naïve minds instead of the individual product of a single skilled one. But, like all other music, it is based on characteristic motives, and these motives, or combinations of tones at rhythmic and acoustical intervals new with each instance, have in the first place to occur in the consciousness of an individual. Alike then for folk-song and art-song, the germ of any piece of music is that odd reaction of an individual to his environment which we call a musical motive. In this respect, Bach is at no disadvantage with Haydn and Mozart, so far as the employment of folk-music is concerned. It is in the subsequent treatment of the motive that folk-song and art-song differ.

There can be no honest doubt in the minds of intelligent musicians as to the superiority of the average folk-song over the average art-melody of similar length; undoubtedly the oral transmission to thousands of people results in a sifting of the appropriate from the incongruous which few composers can attain by self-criticism. The complete folk-song has usually a perfection of balance and unity of effect which the average composer cannot imitate, but, by the same token, neither can he transplant it, either by quotation or imitation; the folk-song is complete in itself and therefore refuses to be treated in the same manner as a composed melody, which is purposely incomplete because destined for subsequent treatment. Unless skilfully and very specially handled, then, the folk-song loses its essential charm of style when introduced into composed music, and retains only that which it shares with composed melodies,—its raw material.

Haydn and Mozart quoted few or no folk-tunes outright, and I know of no instance where they succeeded in imitating

the style of a folk-tune with anything approaching the artistic success of the true folk-tune. At their best, both of them, especially Mozart, composed beautiful art-melodies quite different from the folk-vein; but for that matter so did Bach. What Haydn and Mozart really did was to endear themselves to their idle and frivolous employers by filling their supposedly serious works with tunes of their own in dance-form. This may be democratization of a lame and feeble sort; but let the sentimentalists remember that it savors less of the field than of the street, less of the fireside than of the amusement hall.

The mistake lies in the coincidence that many folk-songs have a four-bar cadential structure comparable to that of Haydn's and Mozart's tunes. To liken the two, however, is really a libel on the folk-songs. Many beautiful folk-songs use other phrase-lengths than that of two or four measures; in some even there are effective contrasts between three, four, and five-bar phrases. When moreover the four-bar structure is found in folk-music, neither it nor its cadences are ever obtrusive; in Haydn and Mozart both are obtrusive a majority of the time. This irritating "rhymed structure," of which virtuous theorists make so much, is then not borrowed from folk-song, but from the totally different category of music composed, as the same sort is composed today, by inferior writers in a stereotyped manner, not to express their ideas, but to make a little money by supplying the demand for something to keep people's feet going. It must be admitted that many of Haydn's and Mozart's "symphonies"—heaven save the mark!—seem to have been written for the same purpose.

What is the history of this "democratizing" element in music which has stirred so much critical approbation? The dozen or so Haydn symphonies which we enjoy today are full of elisions, extensions, and what not to modify the monotony of the four-bar structure, while the obsolete hundred-odd are much more cadential and "regular," and should therefore theoretically delight the formalists as much as actually they repel them. Mozart's greatest symphonies, the G minor and the "Jupiter," by virtue of warmly emotional melody, harmony, and contrapuntal treatment divert attention from the four-bar structure as earnestly as his obsolete symphonies direct it there. Beethoven did everything possible except throw the four-bar structure overboard: three and five-bar rhythms, phrases extended little or much, "telescoped" phrases, "long breaths," interwoven developments,—all these he combined with a lordly disregard for that other pillar of strength of the Haydn-Mozart system, the full cadence. Schubert, Schumann,

Chopin continued to expand along the general lines indicated by Beethoven and along particular lines of their own; Weber, otherwise conventional-minded, had recourse to the deceptive cadence in unprecedented measure. Wagner demanded "endless melody,"—that is, melody without cadences, in which the phrase-lengths are determined solely by the character of the phrase, and not at all with regard to a fixed number of bars; and he nearly lived up to his theory. Today four-bar structure is practically always either pretty well covered up or wholly absent; while cadences, except for emphasis, are generally avoided. Thus the tendency of serious composers has been steadily away from dance-form and its derivatives toward "endless melody," although that goal has not yet been quite reached by modern writers.

There is, however, an exemplar of "endless melody" even more successful than Wagner,—Johann Sebastian Bach. Take the familiar Toccata in F for organ: Bach herein makes his phrases last as long as he pleases, even up into 'teens of measures; and there is practically no stop for breath except at the end of grand divisions of the whole. In the slow movement of the Concerto in C minor for two claviers and orchestra, a broad cantilena is so steadily expanded, the phrases are so dextrously telescoped, all the joints are so smoothly erased, and the cadences are so few and so discreetly reserved for moments when they are needed for expressive reasons, that, divide the movement into four recognizable grand divisions though we easily may, it is nevertheless literally true that the thematic foreground is one endless melody from the beginning to the end of the movement. These are only two out of hundreds of possible examples in Bach of genuine "endless melody" and "long breath"; it remains to point out that in his fugues the exigencies of fugal exposition bring about numerous shortened and lengthened phrases which in their easy naturalness recall similar rhythmic instances in true folk-song much more strongly than the arbitrarily four-square phrases of Haydn and Mozart ever can.

This question of structure naturally suggests form; and here we come to another of the blessings which Haydn and Mozart are alleged to have conferred upon us,—the standardization of musical form in the sonata mold. By this contribution, it is held, we are to be saved from the necessity of composing such abortive creations as the works of Bach and other "primitives," who were of course all very well in their way, but who, lacking the guiding stereotype, had in formal matters to worry along as well as they could. We are told that the introduction and successful

promulgation of the sonata form changed all this; that the introduction of a form based upon the development of two themes instead of one saved us all from a sort of monothematic damnation, while the concept of "symmetry" with its consequent limitation upon the amount of material employable saved us from the rival polythematic hell.

Much ink and not improbably a little blood has been spilled over the merits of the sonata form, and today it almost may be said that its sanctity is something which few believe but most profess. One might write several volumes of pros and cons without settling exactly what good and harm it has done in the musical world; the present article must confine itself to considering the bare essentials needed to show whether Bach's formal procedure does or does not suffer by comparison with the sonata standard.

It is immediately noticeable that, while the fugue as a type has become obsolete or at least only a "learned exercise" because of the relegation of counterpoint to the academic limbo, while it was a living form it possessed two major virtues, that of securing unity in a composition and that of giving the composer free rein to be original. The former was secured by insuring that the theme should be from time to time recapitulated in a series of expositions following, to be sure, one general plan, but mathematically capable of widely different applications; while the latter was insured by placing no further restrictions upon the composer than the reasonable one that he should eventually make a climax, preferably by the rhythmically exciting device of the stretto or the dramatically exciting device of the pedal or both, though these were not absolutely prescribed. It is to be noticed that neither the length nor the character of the subject was a part of the stipulation, nor the number of voices or expositions, nor the exact keys of the latter, nor the length, character, nor method of the episodes between them. Consequently the composer of a fugue could write a very dull or a very expressive piece according to his talents; he could write a short, gay fugue today, and a long, somber one tomorrow; in one fugue he could have a few expositions and short episodes, in another more expositions, in another longer episodes, in a fourth everything on a large scale; his subjects could vary from three or four notes to twelve measures or longer; his tempo could be slow or quick; he could pile all his climax up at the end, or distribute it over the last third of the composition, or put it in the middle, building up to it and then tapering off: all in all, if he were inventive, the form would not hamper him; if he were not, it could not help him.

Almost the reverse is true of the sonata form in its original strict application. The endless repetition of the themes either in whole or in part demanded that they be short, and the sort of treatment to which they were subjected—at first chiefly the sequential or canonic worrying of fragmentary motives again and again up and down the gamut—put a premium upon trivial “catchy” dance-tunes at the expense of broad melodies expressing deep feeling of any sort, either grand or tender. It is significant that the slow movement, in which the classic model permitted the greatest freedom, is in early symphonies the most expressive of the lot, simply because there is room there for broad and fairly organic melody; whereas the first movement, being technically the most complex and “intellectual” (!) of the molds should not only afford but even enforce the greatest opportunity for expression, unless the sonata-form, too, like the fugue, is to be regarded as “dry learning.”

Of course, a Beethoven confronted with a form in which his worst ideas flowed smoothly to an easy success, while his best ones were tied down to less than a half their natural force could only retaliate by smashing the form. Haydn and Mozart before him had succeeded best, as subsequent experience has shown, with those symphonies and quartets in which they took the most liberties. Beethoven plunged in up to his middle by boldly cramming his expositions with more thematic material than he could possibly develop in the old type of development section. After a series of works in which he developed his material but little, he devised a type of development which, as opposed to the old, may be described as evolution rather than reiteration; in the meanwhile, he burned some of his bridges behind him by attacking and destroying the sanctity of the dominant relationship and admitting the mediant keys as welcome guests into the sonata form. One more stroke, and dance-form was permanently kicked out of the first movement of the sonata, as Haydn and Mozart themselves had already shoved it out of the second movement: this stroke was the evolution of the typical Beethoven theme, such as that with which Opus 53 begins, consisting of two four-bar phrases based on the same motive, followed by a related phrase containing a climax and throwing off the four-bar restriction—a device curiously symbolical of Beethoven's place in history!

The storm now centered about the recapitulation, the key-stone of the “symmetry” of the sonata model. One recalls that “symmetry” is one of the virtues possessed by the sonata form over those in which no recapitulation takes place. Now, obviously,

a real symmetry cannot take place; such a symmetry would place a turning-point, probably the climax, in the center of a movement, and after it the notes would have to be recapitulated backward until the opening was regained. Taking the theme as a unit, the sonata form is still far from symmetrical, because the first theme still precedes the second in the recapitulation. Taking the whole exposition as a unit, the form appears symmetrical; but, since one has to discriminate between the two themes or lose the effect of their contrasting characters, one can regard this symmetry only as a diagram to keep in mind, not as a direct impression produced or producible by the music. The sense of symmetry is therefore much more a matter of pious assumption than of artistic effect.

Beethoven made a good beginning here by frequently employing the slightly modified recapitulation, and since his time the condensed recapitulation, the extended recapitulation, the transposed order of themes, the recapitulation with elaborated material, and many other types of modification have become more general and better esteemed than the literal recapitulation. Recently the whole idea of recapitulation of any sort has become so irksome to modern composers that many of them have sought to do away with this part of their symphonic works altogether; in this it must be admitted that they have been only occasionally rather than habitually successful, and as they have in many cases lost the feeling for a graceful recapitulation on familiar lines, it is sometimes hard to tell in modern symphonies which gives less pleasure, the presence or the absence of a recapitulation. Probably the moderns are right in throwing overboard the conventional manner of restating one's themes, but at the same time a work based on the development of two contrasting themes needs restatement of some sort or other.

More hampering even than the concept of "symmetry" has been the pet belief of theorists for the past hundred years that all formal virtue lies in the development of two contrasting themes. Nobody can deny that the sonata and its allied forms, when handled by a master, possess a desirable combination of unity with variety, or that, when not allowed to degenerate into stereotype, there is an inherent logic and persuasion in their manner of presenting musical ideas to the public. This, however, is very different from saying that such a system is the only one possible, or even the best. The fugue, for instance, can hardly be accused of incoherency or lack of logic in the hands of Bach or even of many lesser men, and the history of music and other



arts suggests that the invention and subsequent vogue of still other forms based upon totally new methods of securing unity and balance is rather to be expected than not.

Already several sonatas of Beethoven have shown that unity even in the sonata form is dependent quite as much upon poetic compatibility as upon the exact succession of themes and tonalities according to pattern; his two-movement sonatas, his sonatas "alla fantasia," and others which are truly in the best sense "alla fantasia" without being specifically so labelled, are surely not only as pleasing and coherent, but also quite as thoroughly imbued with the symphonic spirit, as his regular or nearly regular examples. Chopin in his ballades has shown, what moderns have imitated without giving him credit, that unified and highly developed forms can be built up without regard to the sonata traditions; Liszt in the symphonic poem proved that departures from the letter of sonata form gave more rather than less pleasure to the hearer, and his modern followers have continued his ideas in their "tone poems," at the same time discarding most of his concessions to sonata form; Wagner demonstrated the coherency and steadily cumulative effect of long movements in which there are innumerable thematic ideas and no retracing of steps, only a gradual upbuilding of interweaving motives culminating in a sustained climax; and lately various instances have occurred of compositions based upon a single principal theme, either with or without contrasting material.

But why has it been necessary to "discover" all this? In the works of Bach there are to be found not only innumerable examples of highly developed monothematic procedure, but a number of instances of polythematic yet cohesive treatment as well. No cultivated musician finds the "Chromatic Fantasia" incoherent or confused, yet from one standpoint the work contains a plethora of material which is never recapitulated, while from another there is formally as such no theme at all in the entire composition. It may be urged that the fantasia is "mere preluding" in the style of an improvisation; but let the propagandist of this doctrine sit down and improvise with half the mass, balance, and climax of this fantasia if he can. If on the one hand this fantasia shows a grasp of polythematic free form which has not occurred again in the history of music until Wagner, so do the first movements of Bach's concertos show a grasp of monothematic expressiveness which has never been equalled in its field. The reason that all this has had or still has to be laboriously rediscovered is that, not content with the introduction by Haydn and Mozart of the

sonata form, theorists have insisted that all music should be standardized to its measure. The result is that what should have been merely one stimulating form the more, long ago became a burdensome stereotype and has had to be fought ever since, against a conventional critical opposition which has so seriously retarded musical progress that in this as in much else we have not yet caught up with Bach.

Another reform alleged to have entered with homophony is the establishment of tonality, as opposed to the evident lack thereof in the works of Palestrina and Lassus. Now, there is something to be said on both sides regarding tonality of any sort: one need not question the effectiveness and desirability of a firm tonality for nine compositions in ten if one points to beautiful harmonic progressions, in Palestrina or in Debussy, for instance, which would have been lost to the world if their authors had felt obliged to tie themselves to a particular tonality, and there is no doubt that in times to come more and more charm will be shed upon music by more and more frequent use, when esthetic fitness seems to favor, of passages long or short in which for the time being tonality is purposely avoided. Here as in so many other details the virtues of a good method have been held to make the method obligatory instead of merely an added resource. Among the incidental grave losses which this bureaucratic policy has caused is the nearly total abeyance, until the beginning of modern French music, of the rich emotional and coloristic resources of modal harmony.

But there is still more to the question. In Bach there is certainly no lack of tonality, even although, according to prevalent belief, his harmonies were not thought out but were only the incidental by-product of his counterpoint; the mighty sweep of the last two pages of the F major Toccata for organ, to give an example, is a sustained climax with emphasis on tonality such as only Wagner can equal. If Bach's tremendous diatonic and chromatic sequences, long-drawn pedal points, and crashing dissonances, emphasizing tonality as they unmistakably do, are born of a disregard for harmony, while Haydn's and Mozart's timid vacillations from tonic to dominant or sub-dominant and back again, with persistent runs to cover in the form of cadences, represent the paths of tonal righteousness, let us in the name of all that is worth living for become musical anarchists and learn from father Bach that recklessness so productive of desirable results.

More can be said for the practice of avoiding an over-solicitude for "smooth" harmony at the expense of counterpoint. The human

ear needs but little training to reach a point where, within reasonable limits, it would rather hear two voices work out their logical destiny than hear the one or the other despoiled of its melodic effectiveness by some modification introduced to take the edge off a dissonance. Haydn and Mozart started the pernicious custom of musical euphemism; time and again in their works the ear expects, as a matter of musical logic, to hear and enjoy the semitonal clash, only in most cases to be disappointed with some emasculate evasion by means of an interpolated sharp or flat. Bach never abuses the ears of his hearers, but neither does he coddle them, and when he uses the semitonal clash it cuts clean. Beethoven and others since have ventured gradually to introduce dissonance into music, and Brahms has caught the knack of Bach's bold and effective cross-relations; but "tradition" has blocked the way, and every step has had to be fought for. Even today the following passage, from Bach's fifth "Brandenburg" concerto, with its juxtaposition of F sharp, G sharp, F natural, and G natural, has not lost its freshness and "tang":—



In the matter of instrumental color Bach was of course hampered by the lack of modern instruments, and much of his scoring seems in this important respect monotonous, or at least monochromatic. The standardization by Haydn and Mozart of an orchestra containing two each of flutes, oboes, clarinets, bassoons, horns, and trumpets, a pair of kettledrums, and strings was of course beneficial progress from such combinations as three trumpets, three oboes, and strings, and to Haydn and Mozart is due the highest credit for completing the wood-wind family in the orchestra, while of course they are not to blame for not having done as much for the brass, as valves had not yet revolutionized the technique of that group. With this well merited praise, however, one must stop; for, except in a few isolated cases, Haydn and Mozart did not begin to avail themselves of their rich

resources of instrumental color to the extent that Bach often availed himself of his slender resources.

One of the greatest "innovations" in modern orchestration is Wagner's grouping of his wind instruments by threes instead of twos, a practice the principal advantage of which is the possibility of representing the whole triad at any time in one tone color. However, like many other modern "innovations," this is actually a rediscovery, following a period of forgetfulness induced by the standardization of Haydn and Mozart. In Bach's orchestral works, the grouping of wind instruments by threes is a common practice, by means of which a quite modern solidity is obtained in a numerically thin score, owing to the presence of whole triads in each and all of the tone-colors. Finally, as if to spite us in our attempt to discover anything new under the sun, the oboe and English horn quartets of Strauss in "*Till Eulenspiegel*," "*Salome*," and other works are anticipated by the beautiful quartet for two oboi d'amore and two oboi da caccia in the Christmas Oratorio.

In the matter of ensemble, Bach sometimes persisted in the monochromatic doubling and reinforcing of his predecessors and followers; sometimes, however, he individualized his instruments to a degree which the moderns have only recently begun to emulate. In the Brandenburg concertos, for the performance of which expert players were available, and in isolated numbers from his larger works, there are magnificent examples of that "solo" treatment of all the parts which the public of today admires in Wagner, Debussy, and others, and would admire in Schönberg but for the incidental terrors of a revolutionary harmonic scheme. In comparison, the symphonic scores of Haydn and Mozart, with each instrument permanently relegated to a prescribed constant function and with the endless doubling of strings and wind on the same parts in the same manner, seem as stereotyped from the standpoint of instrumental ensemble as our modern American theater music, in which fidelity to stock effects combined with the same sort of all-embracing doubling enable the director to give a piece with any combination of instruments at hand, and the individual player to take a rest when he is tired or lazy. Serviceable as such an arrangement may be from some points of view, it hardly represents the artistic heights to which orchestration may be expected to soar.

Particular notice must be paid to Bach's handling of single instruments of his ensemble, especially in solo or obbligato passages. Nowhere is this more noticeable than in his passages for trumpet,

which are brilliantly effective but technically very difficult. With Haydn and Mozart the trumpet was reduced to the rank of a monotonous noise-maker with the duty of clanging a few open tones in tutti, a function still fulfilled by the cornet in theater orchestras today, except that the valves permit the use of colorless tones and semitones in the alto register instead of the inevitable high tonic and dominant of the natural trumpet. After the much lauded "standardization," trumpet-writing and trumpet-playing alike fell into such decay that Bach's trumpet parts were deemed impossible, and when played at all were handed over to clarinet, oboe, and what not; only with Wagner again did the trumpet begin to return to its own, and today composers are somewhat timidly venturing to write trumpet passages comparable in brilliancy with those of Bach. Nor was the trumpet the only instrument to suffer by standardization; for a century and a half after Bach hardly any instrument was called upon to display its full capabilities: the compass of the violin dropped nearly an octave, and there was a marked falling off in the musicianship required of the second players; the flute was relegated to the dull and uncharacteristic role of doubling the first violins at octaves; the deeper members of the oboe family temporarily disappeared altogether, and had to be replaced in performances of Bach's works by the low register of the clarinets!

More important, however, than all else, is the terrible narrowing of the emotional range of music which took place as an inevitable result of the change from the method of Bach to that of Haydn and Mozart. Pretty as often are the musical ideas of the latter two masters in their symphonies, in variety and intensity of feeling they seem ridiculously and meanly trivial beside the might and grandeur of Bach. In its strictest academic application, the sonata form is absolutely incompatible with lofty expression, as the persistent modifications of its shape by Beethoven attest; and these persistent modifications, assailing as they invariably did and do now one after another of the apparently essential features of the model, naturally gave rise to the idea that there is a constant struggle for mastery in music between form and expression. This wordy war, based upon the misconception that coherency in music is identical with conformity to one fixed type of presentation and development of material, has been savagely waged between critical purists and irrepressible composers, the Hanslicks on one side and the Wagners on the other, until at present a mass of plausible theory opposed to an

accumulation of incontestable achievement in descriptive and dramatic composition has left us as legacy of the strife the absurd compromise solution that there are two kinds of music, that which expresses something and cannot be bound by the laws of form, and that which virtuously foregoes expression for the sake of displaying the beauties of obedience to the laws of form.

Now, obviously, music or any other art can no more embody a struggle between form and expression than real life can present the spectacle of a man riding south on a train running north. Drama, emotion and lyric design are all suitable material for musical expression, and unless there is some of all three in a composer's ideas they are likely not to stand the test of time. Form is coherence, and coherence is not conformity to one model, but a discreet choice from among many. Haydn and Mozart adapted themselves to the unreasonable restrictions of the sonata form by expressing very little; Beethoven and other symphonists since by violating the restrictions and expressing more; Wagner and some others by throwing the whole sonata-form overboard. It is noticeable that in Bach's works this incompatibility is not even solved, for it never arises; Bach expressed the widest of emotional ranges, but one never finds his ideas violating his forms, nor his forms strangling his ideas, because both his fugues, "artificial" though the form is deemed today, and his free preludes and other similar movements, "formless" as our pedants consider them, alike encouraged cohesion with freedom of invention.

The moral is clear enough. In spite of some good, Haydn and Mozart in their instrumental works did a great deal of harm, some of which has not been undone yet. Substituting the four-bar structure for the free melodic phrase based on the inherent traits of the original idea, a monotonous homophony relieved by a few familiar tricks for vital and fluid counterpoint, a predetermined combination of stock effects in scoring for individualization of the instruments, and an arbitrary "symmetrical" form based upon a stated number of themes in prearranged keys for free progressive forms in which any number of themes could work out their natural salvation for themselves, Haydn and Mozart did more than anyone else to fasten upon the art of music a stereotyped manner of treatment which, as one shrewd thinker has put it, has been ever since "a crutch for mediocrity and fetters for genius."

It is only fair to point out that Haydn in his oratorios deals with grand ideas through the medium of free forms, characteristic instrumentation and other devices familiar to the student of Bach;



and Mozart in his operas does the same thing, in a different field. It cannot, however, be denied that neither Haydn nor Mozart, even in their most eloquent moments, ever attained the quantity, quality, or variety of expression of Bach.

It is also only fair to point out again that the completion of the wood-wind family is something for which Haydn and Mozart should be thanked, and that their insistence upon the sonata form introduced into music not only a new form but a new point of view as well, not however to supplant what existed already but to augment and complement it.

It will therefore aid the cause of musical progress if musical education, instead of holding up to the student Haydn and Mozart as models, and then leaving him to decide, under considerable adverse pressure, whether to sacrifice his originality to the stereotype or devise for himself means of evading it, would rather relegate these masters to an honorable but subordinate place, holding up as the true model and prototype Johann Sebastian Bach. Let the student learn to compose brief motives of genuine character, then to develop them into phrases of various lengths, and finally to make "endless melodies" out of them; let him learn to harmonize, at first perhaps with simple chords, but more and more weaning himself from the vertical to the horizontal, of course learning to discriminate between foreground and background, that he may avoid "dry learning"; then the fugue and sonata side by side, as radically opposite strict forms; let him acquire that self-control which will enable him to handle free monothematic and polythematic forms; let him then learn to apply Bach's treatment of solo instruments and his tripartite handling of small groups to modern resources of instrumental color and sonority; last but not least, let him learn by contact to esteem Bach's grand and broad sweep of emotion as more to be desired than musical sugar-candy, yea, than much sweet sugar-candy. At the close of several years' intelligent pursuit of such a course he will find himself where a like period spent in assimilating the "classic model" would never bring him; for, even if he has not had time to familiarize himself with recent and contemporary music, he will find himself ready and able, if he has real talent, to begin where the moderns are leaving off.

## GESTURE AND SCENERY IN MODERN OPERA

By JOHN PALMER

IN discussing the modern production of Opera it is unnecessary to go beyond Wagner. Wagner, who left nothing as he found it, not only started the producers upon a new career, he also provided them with a philosophy which purported to raise a respectable handicraft to the level of a deep, hieratic mystery. We find in Wagner's "Opera and Drama" a clearer suggestion of that shadow-show towards which Mr. Gordon-Craig is now groping than is contained in any of the modern books. In stage-craft, as in music and song, Wagner, who simply sets out to prove that his own dramas were the only possible dramas, proved more than he was aware of. His deep discussion of the function of gesture and stage representation in opera still remains the most convenient point from which to approach the most modern developments.

"Opera and Drama" is perhaps the greatest piece of special pleading in literature. Those critics who have been content to exclaim against its portentous, hopeless and needless difficulty—who see in Wagner's prose works little more than a deplorable evidence of the author's pugnacity and conceit—have chosen to deny themselves much light and wisdom. It is true that, if Wagner's operas were destroyed, Wagner's prose works would be unintelligible. But the difficulty of Wagner's prose works almost disappears if we read them as foot-notes and prefaces to his music-dramas. Wagner's prose works in every line and paragraph have a direct bearing upon his own practise. The vast and general statements which sprawl across his pages seemingly without system—statements which to the casual reader are formless and vague—become quite definite and clear when we remember that Wagner is writing, not a self-supporting thesis as he cunningly pretends, but an apt and strictly pertinent defence of some particular musical or literary habit of his own. Wagner in his writings upon Opera is vague and general, and leaves out all the instances which might clinch his propositions, because he is thinking always of his own works—of a passage in *Tristan* or *Siegfried*—and does not realise that the general reader is usually a less complete Wagnerian than Wagner. Besides, it would

hardly do for him systematically to lighten the obscurity of his philosophic apothegms with quotations from his own works. That would give away the very special character of his special pleading. Wagner liked to think that the world had waited centuries for his music dramas; that they were the fulfilment of a primaeval purpose; that they could be justified by the nature of things. For this reason he prefers to talk in the largest and most general terms without pettifogging references to texts and examples. These must be supplied by the reader; and, if the reader cannot supply them, the reader, more often than not, will be unable to form the least idea as to what Wagner is talking about.

This is as true of what Wagner has written concerning scenery and gesture in drama as of what he has written concerning music and speech. His metaphysics of scenery and gesture are unreadable till we remember what were Wagner's personal practices and prejudices in these matters. Unless we know what concrete thing it is which Wagner has in his mind, and wants to prove or defend, the statements and arguments of Wagner concerning scenery and gesture are like a game of chess for those who do not know the rules. If, however, we have learned the rules—if, that is, we read his philosophy of gesture from our knowledge of what Wagner liked to do with paint, cardboard and with the arms and legs of his singers—the game is plain enough.

We have to remember that Wagner yearned after the theatre long before he had learned to yearn after Beethoven. He started as a youthful writer of solemn tragedy. As a very young man he positively delighted in the smell and atmosphere of the stage. This first enthusiasm for things theatrical never left him. A childish pleasure in the daubs and haberdashery of the theatre lived on side by side with his mature passion for music and his quite respectable talent for verse.

A very striking and amusing instance of Wagner's delight in the mechanism of his stage and of the extremity of his anxiety that nothing should thwart his ingenious devices has just been offered us in the memoirs of Mme. Lilli Lehmann. Mme. Lehmann was dear to Wagner because she sang his music very beautifully and also sympathised with all his troubles as a stage manager. Wagner addresses her affectionately as "dear child" and "most excellent child." It is not surprising therefore that she is able to tell us some of those trivial things about her Master which are so important and precious to the biographer. One of her best pages relates how, when the Rhinemaidens at Bayreuth

first saw the perilous machine in which Wagner required them to simulate the movements of a mermaid, they were one and all seized with giddiness and dismay. Finally Riezl, "brave as death," climbed into the suspended belt, and showed that the thing could be done without loss of life. Mme. Lehmann shortly followed, and all was well. But it is Wagner we are watching; and of Wagner it is quite simply recorded that he shed tears of delight! He probably thought more of the Rhinemaidens' swimming machine than he did of their music. It all seems very childish to the artists and mechanics of the modern stages at Moscow or Berlin; but we need not be unduly sorry for Wagner's curious enthusiasm. It is true that Wagner's stage, on its mechanical and plastic side, is as bad as anything which the obliging Parisians perpetrated for Meyerbeer. On the other hand, if it had not been for Wagner's boyish enthusiasm for cardboard, dragons and toy castles, we should never have had the music-dramas at all. Wagner would have invented instead the symphonic poem, and have taken to himself the laurels which only after a generation we are now according to Liszt. We must take the cardboard, the paint, the limelight, and the stuffed birds of Wagner as an unfortunate but necessary part of the Wagnerian system; and we must never for a moment forget in reading "Opera and Drama," or in discussing Wagner's influence on modern operatic scenery, that in these matters Wagner was never more than a little boy at the pantomime.

But this little boy was able and ready to prove out of history and psychology and metaphysics and religion, not only that his cardboard was essential to Siegfried and Parsifal, but that Mozart and Shakespeare failed because they did not appreciate its necessity. This brings us to Wagner's formal theory of stage scenery, a thing, let us remember, not arising out of Wagner's contemplation of the nature of things, as he pretends, but simply invented to show that he was right, whereas Mozart and Shakespeare by no fault of their own were hopelessly wrong.

There are two important passages in the Third Part of "Opera and Drama" wherein Wagner philosophically justifies the apparatus of his stage. These passages are an excellent illustration of Wagner's method of stating, with the reader's interpretative and intelligent help, his own particular and personal fancies in terms of universal philosophy.

I may therefore the more readily be allowed here to state in the plainest possible English the position which Wagner ascribes to gesture and scenery in his dramas, even though this means

repeating much that is extremely familiar to musicians. We have in this case to begin with Wagner's original distinction between intellect and feeling. It is axiomatic with Wagner that word-speech appeals to the intellect. It can render only what is "utterable," which in Wagner's view means that it cannot render any of the precious things with which the highest art is concerned. Wagner usually thinks of art as appealing to intuitive feeling, as being concerned at its highest power with the "unutterable." For him there are two ways of transcending the utterable, and of speaking directly to the soul through the senses. The first is the way of tonal speech. The second is the way of gesture, gesture including of course the dramatic and visible conduct and relations of all the people of the play and the setting in which they move. Whereas the poet simply defines in intellectual terms the grooves in which feeling shall run, the musician in his verse-melody, or more completely, in his orchestra, communicates to the hearer all the unutterable implications of the poet's theme, while simultaneously there is communicated to the spectator's eye speechless messages corresponding with those he is receiving from the orchestra. It is not possible here to linger upon the thousand controversies this aesthetic system immediately raises. We are here only concerned to notice how high and important a function is assigned by Wagner to gesture and the scenic appeal. Virtually he puts the scenic artist and actor above the poet, for it is the scenic artist and actor, in equal alliance with the musician, who in Wagner's system is allowed to carry the poet's appeal beyond reach of the utterable. The poet speaks only to the intellect; the musician and the actor speak directly to the soul.

There are some astonishing inferences to be drawn from this. Wagner so extravagantly delighted in his castles and toy dragons that he was ready to sweep aside the dramas of Shakespeare as mere stumbling-blocks in the progress of humanity towards the "Ring of the Nibelungen." Shakespeare made no appeal to the physical eye; and would, as Wagner very rightly points out, have been horrified to see his plays presented as a stage pageant. Shakespeare, therefore, according to Wagner's theory, failed altogether to achieve the unutterable. His plays spoke neither to the ear nor to the eye. Mozart appealed only to the ear, the pantomime of his operas being insignificant and unrelated to his music. It was Wagner's special achievement—so he implies in his writings—to bring gesture into alliance with music, to be the first to run in leash the twin Pegasus destined to bear the modern tone-poet into the region where speech falters and is left behind.

It will perhaps be better, instead of setting out to show by theoretic argument the fallacies contained in Wagner's reasoning, to indicate how the modern tendency is to abandon his conception of opera as a union upon equal terms of the arts poetic, plastic and musical. Practise has destroyed his impracticable theory; and practise has had for an ally the jealous particularism of the artist, who naturally tends to rest his appeal as exclusively as possible upon the art to which he himself is devoted. The normal musician has none of Wagner's craving after theatrical brimstone, and he is seldom so constituted that his music must needs be fertilised by speech. Every experiment to combine the arts upon terms of equality has failed and was bound to fail. The theory happened to fit Wagner's own temperament and needs; but it was false to the psychology of normal musicians and the normal audience. Experiment has shown what common sense might clearly have predicted. The literary aspect of Wagner's theory we will for the moment leave on one side, though here the fallacies are most numerous and have been most completely exposed. We will deal primarily with Wagner's attempt to run in leash his twin appeal to feeling through the eye (gesture) and through the ear (music).

There are two ways of approaching the problem of the staging and playing of Opera. We may with Wagner regard gesture, action and scene as of parallel importance with the music, thus allowing the plastic appeal to assert itself, and to thrust itself upon the spectator. Or we may regard it as the function of the plastic and histrionic crafts of the theatre simply to frame, or at most decorate unobtrusively, the appeal of the music. We may take as particular instances of these two methods the Bayreuth production of "Parsifal" and the Petrograd production of "Prince Igor." The comparison is possibly a little unfair to Wagner's method because "Parsifal" was almost in every detail of its presentation as repulsive an example of nineteenth century stagecraft as an opponent of Wagner's theory could wish to cite; whereas the decoration of "Prince Igor" was perfect in execution as in principle.

The distinction between "Prince Igor" and "Parsifal" is that in "Prince Igor" the decorators and actors aimed solely at framing the musician's appeal, whereas in "Parsifal" they are expressly commanded by Wagner to assist and to interpret the music. In "Prince Igor" the decorators and actors desired to be inconspicuous. Their object was not to interfere or distract. The eye was to be quietly satisfied, so that the ear might be



entirely free. In "Parsifal," on the other hand, the decorators and actors desired actively to intrude. The eye was to be forcibly arrested. An obvious bid for attention was continually urged. Let us examine these two methods a little more closely. "Prince Igor" for the moment we will put upon one side. We will consider first the case of "Parsifal" and its modern derivatives.

Wagner's idea was to produce, consonantly with his music, a lovely pageant in gesture and light and colour which should enhance and fortify the appeal of his music. Unfortunately Wagner had not the necessary gifts to carry out his own programme upon the plastic side. What he really does in "Parsifal" is to distract and distress the eye as continuously as he delights and satisfies the ear. It will be objected that the Bayreuth "Parsifal" does not prove that Wagner's theory is unworkable, but only that Wagner was unable to work it. This, for the moment, we allow. At the same time the believers in Wagner's theory can hardly claim that the failure of "Parsifal" is no argument whatever against the theory whereby the composer of "Parsifal" worked. The failure of "Parsifal" is practically inherent in the theory itself; for it witnesses conspicuously to the unlikelihood of ever finding Michael Angelo and Beethoven in one and the same artist. Even if it were desirable to make the simultaneous and perfect appeal to ear and eye at which Wagner was aiming, no one is less likely to be a competent painter and designer than the normal musician of genius. The musician of genius is usually the last person to have any real intimacy with the kindred arts. It is true that since Schumann and Berlioz started the literary or journalistic tradition among musicians, they have tended to expand in the direction of articulate speech—usually with rather unfortunate results. But musicians, normal and great, are usually deaf to the finer cadences of the poet and blind to the monstrous futility and ugliness of the old operatic stage. When the modern musician dabbles in philosophy, or humour, or the setting of scenes, he usually distresses those of his admirers who, though they are quite inferior musicians, understand these other matters rather well. Fortunately for the musician his audiences, which are musical, are not usually much more particular than he. Musical people are notoriously indifferent, not only to the highest appeals of the sculptor and painter, but even to the decent comeliness required by ordinary citizens in a family residence or bank buildings. The concert rooms in a town are usually places that seem deliberately to have been made as unpleasant to the eye as possible, as though the musician

pointedly required his audience to receive his impressions solely by means of the cortical cells. The mere fact that concerts and recitals continue to be given in such places shows plainly enough that, when the ear is busy, the eye can discreetly omit to be employed. There must clearly be something wrong with a theory which requires every musician to have a taste for colour and proportion when it is notorious that not one musician in ten thousand objects to hearing beautiful music in places as ugly as the palm court of a first-class hotel. So far as Wagner's theory is vitiated by the improbability of ever finding a musician-poet-architect to work it, "Parsifal" is a fair illustration of its weakness.

But we are not under any need to cling to "Parsifal" with its stuffed birds, "spot-limes" and transformation scenes to show that Wagner's theory is fallacious. In strict logic, "Parsifal" proves only that Wagner had not succeeded with his own system. He has not in the gesture and scenery of his theatre achieved high and unutterable things. He has not appealed in an equal degree to the ear and to the eye.

The question still remains. Can this system really be worked, and, if it were possible to work it, would it be worth while? It is more than a generation since Wagner wrote "Opera and Drama"—a generation of restless experiment and continuous improvement in the arts and crafts of the theatre. How has history itself answered Wagner's aspiration to see the appeal of music wedded with the appeal of the actor and scene-painter?

History has answered Wagner with a flat negative. Musicians seized on Wagner's great revolutionary idea, accepting his use of a drama or programme to shatter or to enlarge the old classical mould invented by the absolute musicians. But they utterly ignored all the rest. Music, having been as it were fertilised anew by a temporary union with the drama, sprang immediately away from its mate and followed the path of its own individual and specialised development. Musicians in a word turned from the Wagnerian music drama to the symphonic poem. Instead of running the twin appeal of eye and ear upon equal terms, they simply turned, as every artist in a special kind will turn, Wagner's new source of musical inspiration to purely musical purposes. They even removed Wagner's own operas from the stage to the concert room, and showed that in many ways they were the better for the change. Every party to the Wagnerian partnership behaved in exactly the same way. Wagner inspired them all to fresh efforts of discovery, but he did not inspire them to form a strict alliance. The scenic artist read "Opera and Drama," and

went off by himself to study a new art of the theatre in which he speedily forgot all about the musician. The dramatic poet read "Opera and Drama," and he, too, went off by himself to improve his poetry, quite undisturbed by any devouring wish to hear it sung to the accompaniment of a full orchestra. The musician read "Opera and Drama," and, despite the modern tendency to take him seriously as a poet and thinker, he continued to content himself with expressing his deepest feelings in music, with occasional relief for his literary yearnings in letters to the newspapers or occasional heavy jesting upon the margin of his scores. When he wanted to write an opera—that is to say, when in addition to the orchestra he required also the human voice and the chorus—he went to the poet for a libretto, as in the bad old days of Mozart and Beaumarchais. The poet being found in his own particular corner, the musician when he wanted to have his opera mounted and decorated, went to look for the decorator. So it finally happens that Richard Strauss to-day, so far from respecting Wagner's prophetic vision of the opera of the future as a blend of the arts, wisely allows Hofmannsthal and Bakst to do their share of the work each in his own way.

Wagner, in a word, has been unable to turn the arts from that path of specialisation and independence which is essential to their progress. Music, poetry, the dance (the dance is gesture in its purest form)—these arts may all touch and mutually inspire one another. It was Wagner's inspired mission to bring them into a momentary contact whence they severally derived fresh energy to pursue their individual ways. But after the moment of contact, progress could only be made by each turning again to work out its own salvation. The arts of the poet, the musician and the dancer have each a logic of their own. Only by freely and dissociately following the genius of its being can music attain to expressing the highest of which it is capable. This equally applies to the poet, whose limitation to the region of mere intellect was one of Wagner's crudest blunders—a blunder natural in a musician who had very little sense for the appeal of the greatest literature.

The way of specialisation has been taken as consistently by the dance or gesture (which is now more especially our subject) as by the other forms of art. The modern history of these several arts since Wagner wrote is admirably illustrated by the way in which gesture or dance has tended utterly to dissociate itself from opera and drama. Wagner's theory of gesture was that it began to attain to subtlety and deep significance in proportion as it became more firmly united with poetry and song. The pure

dance he describes as the most elementary form of gesture; and he regards it as the function of the poet and musician to carry it further and cause it expressively to convey to the eye the poet's story and the musician's feeling. Reduced to the strict and literal sense of plain terms Wagner puts pantomime—the gesture and play whereby his Siegfried or his Parsifal illustrate their authors' musical meaning—above the unfettered dance which exists solely for itself. The progress of the arts was, he asserted, to bring together drama and the dance. The pure dance he regarded as he regarded absolute music: it needed to be linked up with poetry and song to make it of supreme significance. The drama or programme was to vitalise the dance, and start it upon fresh paths in the same way as it had vitalised the absolute music of Beethoven.

Exactly the opposite of Wagner's prophecy has occurred. The trend of the modern dancer is towards a dissociation and specialising of his art. Like the musician he was inspired by the Wagnerian drama into a new field; but after the first inspiration he turned from the drama or pantomime and developed entirely along the lines of his own art. The history of the Russian ballet is the history of a gradual realisation that pantomime, far from enhancing the pure gesture of the dance by giving it a definite or programme significance, checked and thwarted its appeal at every turn. The pantomime ballet in which the Russian dancers have for many years most skilfully and faithfully persevered, has, regarded as gesture, proved at its best and loveliest to be little more than a *danse manqué*, or, regarded as drama, to be crude and confused. Accordingly the dancers of finest genius, notably M. Nijinski, have tended more and more to strike out the pantomime and to make the dance as absolute in its new, free, subtle forms as it was in the old days of the minuet or the gavotte. So far has the reaction gone against Wagner's desire to harness gesture to the musical poet's wheel that M. Nijinski has even smiled upon a suggestion made by me in the "Saturday Review" to take the purification of the dance a step further and to eliminate music, making the dance entirely self-sufficing and absolute. This, of course, is at this time impracticable. The dance is as yet in too elementary a stage. Its language is not yet sufficiently definite. We have nothing yet in the dance's appeal to the eye to correspond with the established conventions of music. There is no well-tempered clavier of the dance, no such traditional, immediate and intelligible appeal to the eye as is the appeal of music to the ear. Possibly the dance will never be able to

stand alone as a significant and satisfying art, such as is the art of the poet or the art of the musician. That is not the point of this present argument. The mere fact that such speculations are in the air is enough for our purpose. That the dancer, having as far as possible eliminated the poet, should dream also of eliminating the musician is proof enough, however impracticable the dream, that the present tendency is not towards, but away from, the union of the arts.

Perhaps an even more significant sign of the modern tendency towards specialising the arts is afforded in the career of Mr. Gordon Craig. Mr. Craig began with the Wagnerian vision; but he speedily found that a union of the arts in the theatre was a self-destructive idea. He started, as a producer, with a simple postulate: namely that a real significant union of the arts upon terms of equality was impossible if W. wrote a play, X. mounted it, Y. directed its gesture, Z. composed its incidental music. He therefore set out to discover a theatre wherein the producer of the art-work should be absolute master and sole executor in vision and craft. The long story of his pilgrimage cannot here be related. Suffice it that Mr. Gordon Craig, being by genius a draughtsman and designer, has found it necessary, in order to achieve unity in his theatre, actually to eliminate everyone else. First he eliminated the actor, whose caprice and mobility naturally defeated the fixed and absolute intentions of a producer who thinks almost exclusively in colour and line. In place of the actor Mr. Craig desired a super-doll, whose gestures could be strictly regulated. The super-doll could be made absolutely to conform with the beautiful in gesture without irrelevant intrusion of the purely human. Second, he eliminated the poet, on the ground that the plastic appeal of gesture—the language of pure rhythm in space towards which Mr. Craig is moving continually—has of itself significance enough to stand alone. Nothing now remains to Mr. Craig but music and gesture, music being overlooked merely because Mr. Craig, not being a musician, naturally regards it as no more than an insignificant accompaniment of the art in which he is primarily interested. Nothing could more clearly illustrate the modern tendency away from Wagner than this curious progress of Mr. Craig. He started with a firm belief in the union of the arts. He has instinctively arrived at a complete specialising of the one art for which he happens to have a natural genius. This progress is the more significant in that it was purely intuitive. Mr. Craig is quite unable to explain his own career. His writings purporting to do so are wholly mysterious; but his practise is clear enough.

Mr. Craig's reasoning was simple, and his conduct inevitable. The union of the arts needed in the arts united a master of them all. Therefore he turned in practise away from union, and towards a special cultivation of the art in which he himself excelled. But there was another and an opposite line of progress, the line taken by Professor Reinhardt and by the directors at Petrograd. This was to encourage each artist to develop on his own lines, and then to bring them into partnership when their work was done. Let Humperdinck and Vollmöller and Stein each work out their own particular salvation, and then let them be regimented by a producer who will reconcile their special claims to attention and employ one to enhance the other. Or let Rimsky-Korsakoff, Pushkin and Bakst be similarly organised, and put under a chief-of-staff who will regard their work from his own conception of the total effect required. Mr. Gordon Craig expressly mocks at this conception; and his logic in this respect is clear and unanswerable. Let us, however, persist in regarding practise rather than logic. How has this chief-of-staff conception worked? Does it actually in practise dodge the practicable impossibility of Wagner's demand that, in the hands of one supreme artist, gesture and music should be allied upon equal terms?

One of the most complete experiments yet made in this direction was recently afforded by the production in London of the "Coq d'Or." So perfect was this production that a musician might well have enjoyed it for the music alone; a connoisseur in costume and setting, who could not understand a note of music, might have delighted in the performance simply as a feast for the eye; a purely literary audience might well have rejoiced in the libretto, even though he resented its obscuration by music which for him had no appeal; and finally, a lover of dancing and eloquent gesture, might regard the whole production as designed solely for his own delight. Wagner's theory, found to be quite impracticable in the hands of one man, had here the best chance it will ever command of showing what it could achieve in the hands of half a dozen. Every difficulty of the Wagnerian system had been countered so far as organisation could counter it. Rimsky-Korsakoff had contributed his best music. The Russian soloists and chorus were picked musicians. The drama was good enough to live alone. The costumes of Mlle. Gontcharova would have adorned a public gallery. The mimicry and dancing were as good as Europe could supply. Each of these separate appeals of independent contributors had been skillfully induced to agree one with another; and the practical difficulty of combining



significant gesture with significant music had been solved by giving the music to one set of people and the gesture to another. Mme. Dobrowolska sang E in alt. while Mme. Karsavina danced accordingly. M. Basile Petroff, sitting at ease with nothing to interfere with the perfect delivery of his notes, was supported by M. Adolf Bolm in the centre of the stage, making his music simultaneously visible to the eye.

What was the effect of this perfect illustration of the Wagnerian theory? Virtually its effect was to disprove all that Wagner had assumed. We were able to feel, what might have been inferred from our experience of the working of the human mind, that the arts, far from reinforcing one another when allied upon equal terms, distracted the senses and confused the mind. The audience was in the position of a wireless receiver jammed by the simultaneous reception of several messages. The continuous and lively appeal to the eye had firmly to be put on one side if we needed to get the full effect of the appeal to the ear. The *theory* was that we were contemplating a work of art every part of which helped us to receive and to understand the whole. The *fact* was that we were really trying to contemplate several works of art at once, each speaking an idiom of its own and each claiming to be received. It did not relieve our distress and confusion of mind that each work of art was trying to say the same thing as its fellow. We merely knew that gesture and music, far from helping one another, got continually in one another's way. The happiest members of the audience were those to whom either the music or the gesture was secondary. Musicians who were blind to the gesture enjoyed the music, and choreographers who were deaf to the music enjoyed the gesture. Those who were more open to one appeal than the other either shut their eyes and opened their ears, or shut their ears and opened their eyes. Those in the audience who really suffered, and got little beyond a fidgetty sense of being continuously thwarted, were precisely those who realised that Wagner's theory of significant gesture and significant music allied upon equal terms was being illustrated in a thoroughly competent and admirable fashion. They soon concluded that either the music or the gesture was enough. Rimsky-Korsakoff expressed in his score all that he desired to express concerning King Dodon. It did not help us in the least that M. Bolm was repeating King Dodon for us in another medium. On the other hand if one attended to M. Bolm, Rimsky-Korsakoff became superfluous.

The strict inference of logic would be to abolish opera, and song, and dancing to music—any aesthetic appeal which requires

an alliance of the arts. But strict logic as usual leads us headlong into absurdity. The failure of the "Coq d'Or" to create in us a united and simple appeal does not mean that one art cannot come to terms with another. Otherwise we should have to regard most of the great music of the world as a great mistake. The fallacy which destroyed the "Coq d'Or" as a united work of art—which destroys also the fallacy of the Wagnerian system—is contained in a clause we have hitherto overlooked. An alliance of the arts is not only possible; it is approved by the sense and the need of all mankind, which has always insisted that words should go with music and music with the dance. The thing which is impossible is, not a union of the arts, but a union of the arts *on equal terms*.

This brings us back to "Prince Igor." Borodin's Opera was produced on the assumption that, when music is in the ascendant, it is the duty of the subsidiary arts to be unobtrusive. It is impossible to attend with an equal concentration to half a dozen appeals at once; but, once we are clear that the main appeal is to be a musical appeal, we are well able to allow the allies of music to assure us that all is well. It would be wrong to say that the other arts do not matter at all so long as the music is divine and well rendered. This would be preaching to operatic producers an extreme doctrine of dinginess and squalor. But we must be quite clear that it is not the business of scenery and gesture in opera to compete with the music—to insist upon an independent appeal in its own idiom—but merely to decorate it. In place of the alliance upon equal terms, we must have an alliance in which one art or another is supreme. If the finer appeal belongs to the music, the rest must be no more than decoration. Otherwise we are simply setting up side by side two or more works of art, each claiming to be heard in a language of its own, each appealing to separate senses in the individual, and, in practise, each appealing in different relative degrees to different members of the audience.

Philosophic or psychological justification of the truth of the decorative principle is hardly needed, for this truth has been justified by the tendency of modern practise in all the arts of the theatre. It is illustrated, not only in opera, but in the production of poetic drama. Wagner's theories have had a deep influence, outside music, upon many people who would not dream of affiliating their conduct to his teaching. His elevation of the arts, which in the theatre should normally be decorative, into an alliance upon equal terms with music and song started our producers of Shakespeare upon a false pilgrimage, which for a generation has made of the poet a mannequin for theatrical haberdashers. Wagner himself

would have warned them against this foolish blunder; for, though Wagner thought Shakespeare was wrong in appealing only by the spoken word, he had had sense enough as an artist and a logician to perceive that Shakespeare's plays aim always at the mind's eye and cannot be translated into light and cardboard without being virtually destroyed. But the absurdity which Wagner saw in the particular case of Shakespeare was inherent in his theory, and the late revolt against the absurdity of the particular case has coincided with a tacit confutation of the Wagnerian system. This is seen in two conspicuous and divergent examples. First there is the case of men like Professor Reinhardt and Mr. Granville Barker, who have realised that Shakespeare can only make his full appeal as a poet when his poetry is unencumbered. These producers have reduced the art of presenting Shakespeare to the art of decorating him; and are gradually coming to realize that, the simpler and more conventional the decoration, the more effectively Shakespeare is able to speak to the imagination. The cumbrous machinery of the theatres of Sir Henry Irving, Sir Johnston Forbes-Robertson and Sir Herbert Tree—machinery which frequently stopped the poet's mouth in order to appeal to the spectator's eye—is now discarded wherever the theatre is in living contact with the time. The second proof, by instance, of this tendency towards a submission of the subsidiary art as opposed to a mutual interpretation in alliance, is the inverted example, already described, of Mr. Gordon Craig. He aimed, on the Wagnerian principle, at interpreting Shakespeare afresh in line and colour—at conducting an appeal to the eye, parallel to and of equal importance with, the poet's appeal. He found this was unworkable. He found that the double appeal could not be simultaneously achieved, and was not worth achieving. Either Gordon Craig or Shakespeare was superfluous. Mr. Gordon Craig accordingly dispensed with Shakespeare.

Modern practise and common sense alike go to show that the instinct is not wholly wrong which has prompted audiences to overlook the fact that the finest songs of the world are not necessarily composed to the finest language. Here, again, we see an illustration of our theory of decoration. Our theory would prompt us to deplore a very bad libretto, not because we actually require inspired dramatic poetry to run parallel with inspired music, but simply because we ask not to be made excessively aware of the dramatic poetry. If a libretto is utter nonsense, its absurdity will call for our attention and rebuke; and this is as calamitous, but not more calamitous, than execrable scene painting or ridiculous acting. All these things, if they are excessively foolish, tawdry,

or commonplace, clamour to be noticed. Just as "Parsifal" is spoiled by childish theatrical devices, so "The Magic Flute" is spoiled by its childish libretto. This, however, does not mean that we require the painting and the poetry to be magnificently inspired. We do not hunger for an alliance of the arts upon equal terms; but we do desire that the music shall not be hampered and interrupted. The practical needs of the average audience are satisfied when one art is admittedly supreme, and the others are competently unobtrusive.

This is exactly what the history and psychology of art would seem to require. History shows that, though the arts begin together, and are ready to come into touch at many points of their career, yet each art requires solitude and freedom for its own special development. The poet, elaborating his own subtle and particular appeal, writes of

"Magic casements opening on the foam  
Of perilous seas in fairylands forlorn."

To the appeal of such immortal syllables music can add nothing. It can only destroy or confuse their beauty. It is a blunder to take great poetry as the raw stuff of a song—as great a blunder as it would be for a poet to write words between the staves of a great symphony. The musician who would set Keats's "Nightingale" to music is inviting all who have a sense of literature to note that he has destroyed the rhythms and echoes of a perfect ode before they are able to note that he has, or has not, put in their place a musical appeal of an equal quality. If his music is as beautiful as the poetry of Keats, he demands of us that we should forget Keats before we can attend to his own achievement. If, on the other hand, his music is inferior music, we simply realise that the poetry of Keats has been unnecessarily spoiled. We cannot simultaneously receive upon equal terms an equally supreme appeal presented in different languages and introducing a wholly distinct set of values for our appreciation. Music, poetry and the dance were children together, and may yet unbend together. But their finer secrets are secrets from one another. At a hint from the poet or the sculptor the musician may start off into a world of his own; but neither the sculptor nor the poet can follow him into its inmost recesses. Similarly the musician may inspire the poet. All the arts may exchange texts one with another, and all the arts may draw upon nature, the same eternal nature, for their matter. The poet may write of music, the musician may

render again the landscape which the painter has set upon his canvas. But the way of each art is none the less lonely: there can be nothing either parallel or simultaneous in their diverse appeals.

Curiously enough the fact which so decisively proves the self-sufficiency and loneliness of the several arts is precisely that which tempted the Wagnerian to aspire towards their union—namely the fact that many great musicians have been utterly blind to things like literature or dramatic logic. The spectacle of mighty Beethoven taxing himself to find music for a tenth-rate melodrama, the cool disregard of the Italians for anything but the music of their operas, the cheerful respect of Mozart for dramatic material which to-day would hardly be thought adequate to the needs of a modern *révue*—these things pained a generation of musicians who also were literary smatterers; and they were ready to tumble into the opposite extreme of error. It is undoubtedly a mistake to take nonsense for a libretto, because, even when the musical sense is held and satisfied, the nonsense will annoy those portions of the mind which are less actively engaged. In the same way it is a mistake to stage or to act opera with an utter disregard of what will or will not offend the eye, because it will spoil and distract our reception of the music if the eye is rudely hurt. This does not, however, imply either that Goethe would be a good librettist for a musician, or that cartoons by Raphael would add a jot to the pleasure we derive from "The Magic Flute."

Happily the present generation of producers and actors of opera have begun to realise this. Ironically enough Wagner's own dramas have helped to disprove the theory of the triple and perfect appeal. Wagner's success rests, indeed, on the failure of his dramas to conform to his own exacting formula. They succeed, not because they appeal to us in many ways, but because they appeal to us only in one way. They are not instances of a triple alliance between the arts upon equal terms. They are instances of a supreme musical appeal, less impeded by literary and dramatic absurdity than the majority of operas of the past. Wagner's verse has no independent appeal of its own. It contains no fine literary values to be superseded or marred by being constrained to observe the logic and spirit of a musical idea. Wagner's verse is just good enough to serve as a hint or foundation for his music. It never interferes with the music by asking for special attention. No one would dream of attending the Ring cycle for the sake of the drama. As in all successful alliances of the arts there is no

possibility of distraction or doubt as to the idiom in which the supreme message is being delivered.

It is even more true of the Wagnerian stage that no one would dream of neglecting a bar of the music for the sake of the gesture by which Wagner set such store. Wagner's stage hitherto has worried very few of his admirers because the plastic arts of the stage have till lately hardly existed at all. More will be heard of it in the future; for the problem already arises as to how it can be made inoffensive enough to avoid spoiling the music by its intrusion. The very nature of the problem shows to what ruin the Wagner theory has been brought. Our aspiration to-day is not to improve Wagner's theatre on the plastic side till we are able to set up an appeal to the eye on a level with his mighty music. Our problem is simply to improve Wagner's theatre, if possible, out of sight and mind. We know now that the art of staging a masterpiece in music, like the art of staging a masterpiece in poetry, is the art of being inconspicuous. We have to find a way of decorating Wagner as we have begun to decorate Shakespeare. Similarly, just as we are learning that Shakespeare's supreme magic has to be uttered and not acted—that, because he was a dramatic poet, a beautiful delivery of his verse is the essential thing to achieve—so we are learning that Wagner's supreme magic has to be sung. The acting, so long as it is not urgently and noticeably exaggerated or irrelevant, can very well be left to look after itself. We shall continue to teach our operatic singers to act. But we shall also counsel them, when it comes to the point, to forget all about their acting.



